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Why Normative Realists Ought To Be Robust Naturalists

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Why Normative Realists Ought To Be Robust Naturalists

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Dedication

To Sarah. We did it.

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Abstract

Why Normative Realists Ought To Be Robust Naturalists

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Some philosophers think that facts about how we should think or act—the *normative* facts, as I will call them—do not depend wholly on the various attitudes or feelings we have about things. Call these philosophers *realists*. In my dissertation, I argue that the only viable form of realism is one on which normative facts are causally efficacious and fully depend on non-normative facts. Call this form of realism *robust naturalism*.

Most arguments for robust naturalism assume a broader doctrine of metaphysical naturalism—roughly, the view that there are no non-natural or supernatural facts. My own arguments for robust naturalism do not assume this. I argue, first, that only robust naturalists can give a satisfactory reply to certain worries about the evolutionary influence on our normative beliefs; and second, that only robust naturalists can give a plausible account of how normative facts are grounded.

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Chapter 1: A New Evolutionary Debunking Argument Against Moral Realism[1]

INTRODUCTION

Recently, philosophers have been especially concerned with the role that evolution has played in shaping our moral faculties. None deny that evolution has had some influence. But some argue that, if moral realism were true, such evolutionary influence would undermine our moral knowledge. I, and others, find such "evolutionary debunking arguments" (EDAs) to be deeply flawed, as they are normally formulated. In this paper, I formulate a new EDA, which targets moral knowledge indirectly, by providing a defeater for belief in categorical reasons. But if realism is true, then all positive moral beliefs entail the existence of at least one categorical reason. I argue from this that realism entails moral skepticism. One major virtue of this "New EDA" is that it does a much better job at avoiding the deepest problems with standard EDAs.

The structure of this paper is as follows. In §1, I formulate what I call the Standard EDA. This argument is meant to put in its most plausible form what is common to all (or at least most) of the EDAs on the market today. In §2, I summarize four popular objections to the Standard EDA. In §3, I defend the New EDA. Finally, in §4, I revisit the objections

[1] Based on Justin Morton (2016) "A New Evolutionary Debunking Argument Against Moral Realism" *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 2: 233-253.

to the Standard EDA, showing how two of them don't threaten the New EDA, while with regard to the other two, the New EDA has distinct advantages over the Standard EDA. I conclude that there is a strong case to be made that, if moral realism is true, then we rationally ought to be moral skeptics. This is, at the very least, a high price for realists to pay.

SECTION 1: THE STANDARD EDA

Moral realism, as I define it, is the thesis that (i) sincere moral judgments express beliefs, (ii) some of those beliefs are true, and (iii) the truth of moral beliefs does not constitutively depend on the attitude of any actual or hypothetical agent (Shafer-Landau 2012: 1). There have been many objections to moral realism on evolutionary grounds (Street 2006; Joyce 2007: ch. 6; Horn forthcoming; Greene 2008: 35-80; Kitcher 2007; Ruse and Wilson 1986: 173-192).[2] Here I will focus on what I consider the most popular type of evolutionary objection—what I'll call the Standard EDA:

The Standard EDA

1. **Epistemological Premise:** If (a) moral realism is true, (b) evolution has strongly influenced our moral faculties in ways that are doxastically discriminating, and (c) there is no independent confirmation of the reliability of those faculties, then we have no positive moral knowledge.
2. **Empirical Premise:** Evolution has strongly influenced our moral faculties in ways that are doxastically discriminating.
3. **Autonomy:** There is no independent confirmation of the reliability of our moral faculties.
4. Therefore, if moral realism is true, then we have no positive moral knowledge.

[2] I make no claims to perfectly summarize any author's views; I attempt here to construct the best possible objection that makes sense of what such authors say.

I'll explain (2) and (3) before explaining (1)—but first, a terminological point. "Positive moral knowledge" is knowledge of a positive moral claim. A positive moral claim is one that attributes a moral predicate to something. Examples include "Stealing is wrong" and "It would be generous to buy this man a meal." Likewise, when I later talk of "positive moral beliefs," I mean only "belief in a positive moral claim."

Regarding (2), a faculty is influenced by X in a "doxastically discriminating" way iff the faculty is, in virtue of X, disposed to produce beliefs with certain propositional contents rather than others. Consider the belief that incest is wrong. A human who believes that incest is wrong is more likely to have offspring who can pass on their genetic material than a human who doesn't have this belief. This is because incest increases the chances of sterility or deformation in one's offspring, and believing that incest is wrong will make one less likely to engage in it. So, evolution selects for the belief that incest is wrong (or something like it).[3]

Premise (3) is an autonomy thesis about the moral: we cannot confirm the reliability of our moral faculties except by showing that they have generated (mostly) true moral beliefs. But this cannot be done without assuming either the reliability of our moral faculties or the truth of our moral beliefs. For example, there is no moral almanac by which we can check the moral facts.

Premise (1) is the most obscure, partly because, as Shafer-Landau (2012) points out, there are so many ways of understanding why the consequent might follow from (a-

[3] Some might wonder at the idea that evolution could influence our mental faculties at all. But evolutionary psychologists propose that evolution could explain both physiological *and* psychological phenomena. For a fuller account of this proposal, see James (2011): 18-19.

c). Here is one way it has been defended (Joyce 2007: ch. 6; Bedke 2009; Clarke-Doane 2012):

Insensitivity

5. If (a-c) hold, then we would have the positive moral beliefs we do regardless of whether they are true.
6. If we would believe that P regardless of whether P, then we do not know that P.
7. Therefore, if (a-c) hold, then we have no positive moral knowledge.

The plausibility of Insensitivity is not very important here: I give it just as an example of how (1) is defended. But briefly, (6) is supposed to be an intuitively plausible epistemological principle. (5) is claimed to hold because evolution selects for the content of our beliefs, not their truth. It is adaptive for you to believe that you ought to take care of your children regardless of whether it is true.

However, let me emphasize that there are many ways of arguing for (1), and no part of my argument here depends on any one in particular. Furthermore, there may be reasons to doubt (5)—for example, Fitzpatrick (2014) argues that (5) presupposes that evolution is the *only* influence on our moral judgments. But I offer Insensitivity simply to aid in understanding some of the typical rationales that underlie the Standard EDA.

SECTION 2: OBJECTIONS TO THE STANDARD EDA

The Standard EDA, however appealing, has its share of problems. In this section I will summarize four popular, quite strong objections to it. I do not claim that proponents of the Standard EDA have no reply to any of these objections. However, in §4, I'll argue that the New EDA fares better with regard to all of them.

The Limited Explanation Objection

The first objection, one that has received wide support, I will call the limited explanation objection (Shafer Landau 2012: 5-8; Fitzpatrick 2014: 241-246; Parfit 2011: 534-538; Huemer 2008b: 368-392; James 2011: 79-81; Copp 2008: 194; Street 2006: 155). It essentially consists of a denial of the empirical premise, (2). Proponents of the objection grant that there are *some* moral beliefs that have clear and plausible evolutionary explanations (like the belief that incest is wrong). But there are other moral beliefs that do not have such clear evolutionary explanations (e.g., the belief that all human persons have equal and inalienable rights).

With such undebunked beliefs in hand, the realist can take the limited explanation objection in two different directions. She can argue—as Michael Huemer (2008b), Joshua Greene (2008), and Peter Singer (2005) each do—that we should abandon our debunked beliefs while retaining our undebunked beliefs. Though (on a realistic picture) we might have to abandon many of our moral beliefs, we still have moral knowledge, and so the Standard EDA fails. We may even end up with a more coherent set of moral beliefs.

On the other hand, it may be possible to gain back knowledge of our previously debunked beliefs from the undebunked ones. For example, there is a good evolutionary explanation of why we believe that we ought to take care of our children. But there isn't as clear of an explanation of the belief that we ought to take care of any helpless person whose existence resulted partially from our voluntary action. And, in combination with some uncontroversial empirical premises—that my child is helpless, a person, and resulted

partially from my voluntary action—this broader principle entails that I ought to take care of my children. So, I can know the latter, even though belief in it has an evolutionary explanation, because I can infer it from undebunked beliefs. (Maybe there are problems with the example; it is meant only as an illustration.) Whichever of these two strategies the realist takes, she can retain a substantial amount of positive moral knowledge.

Now, the standard debunker does have some available replies. She might argue, e.g., that while the supposedly undebunked beliefs don't admit of *direct* evolutionary explanations, they are *indirectly* explained by evolution (see James 2011: 2.4). But as mentioned earlier, I will not flesh out the dialectic any further. Hopefully, it is clear that the standard debunker has her work cut out for her, and it is unclear whether she will be able to answer the objection.

The Independent Confirmation Objection

Russ Shafer-Landau (2012: 33-35) targets premise (3) of the Standard EDA, claiming that there may be a source of independent confirmation of the reliability of our moral faculties. He claims that we can show that a doxastic faculty is reliable by showing that it is either identical to or a species of a doxastic faculty that we have independent warrant for believing to be reliable. In the moral case, this would be *independent* confirmation in that it does not assume the reliability of our moral faculties, or the truth of any given moral belief. Furthermore, this confirmation is compatible with the autonomy of the moral domain—i.e., that no moral beliefs can be derived from non-moral ones.

Shafer-Landau suggests that whatever faculties generate our non-moral synthetic *a priori* knowledge might also generate some set of our moral beliefs. And we have good reason to trust these faculties, which generate judgments such as that justified true belief is insufficient for knowledge, and that nothing can be red all over and green all over at the same time. But plausibly, those very same faculties also generate our *a priori* moral beliefs, such as that it is *pro tanto* wrong to cause an innocent person to suffer. So we have good reason to trust (at least) the faculties that generate our *a priori* moral beliefs. And it stands to reason that, in the way mentioned in the prior sub-section, from this base we could derive knowledge of many *a posteriori* moral claims. Again, I do not claim here that the standard debunker has no possible reply to this objection—he may, e.g., argue that the faculty that generates our *a priori* moral beliefs is not identical to/a species of any faculty that reliably generates non-moral synthetic *a priori* beliefs. But he has his work cut out for him here.

The Overgeneralization Objection

Some have argued that the Standard EDA—particularly the epistemological premise—is overbroad (Huemer 2008a: 218-219; Enoch 2011: 175-176; Shafer-Landau 2012: 22; Vavova 2014: 82-83; Bedke 2009; Clarke-Doane 2012; see also Plantinga 1993: ch. 12). It seems to entail that if realism about a domain D is true, then strong evolutionary influence on D-faculties entails D-skepticism. But our perceptual faculties have been strongly influenced by evolution, as have our mathematical faculties. So, if realism in these domains is true, then we have no perceptual or mathematical knowledge. But if so, the

objectors claim, there is certainly something wrong with the Standard EDA: certainly perceptual (if not mathematical) realism is true. Since we have perceptual (and mathematical) knowledge, we can justifiably dismiss the Standard EDA, since it implies that we do not. Once again, the standard debunker may have a plausible response. The standard debunker could, e.g., deny mathematical realism and argue that her reasoning does not extend to the perceptual domain since evolution selects for *true* perceptual beliefs (but for a problem with the latter, see Street (forthcoming b: 25-28). However—the old refrain—my point is simply that the path to a satisfactory response is not clear, and may be impassible.

Third Factor Responses

A fourth type of objection to the Standard EDA is what has been called a *third factor response*. Such responses target the epistemological premise, claiming that even if evolution has influenced our moral faculties and there is no independent confirmation of them, we could still be justified in our moral beliefs. Third factor responses generally start by assuming the truth of a substantive moral principle (though for a notable exception, see Behrends 2013). They then show how, on this assumption, evolution predictably brings us to have (at least some) true moral beliefs, even though it doesn't select for the *truth* of those beliefs. Many third factor responses have been proposed (Behrends 2013; Brosnan 2011; Enoch 2010 and 2011: ch. 7; Skarsaune 2011; Wielenberg 2010 and 2014: ch. 4). It will

suffice for my purposes to briefly outline two prominent ones—David Enoch's and Erik Wielenberg's.

Enoch asks us to assume (plausibly) that our survival—or whatever evolution "aims" at—is at least somewhat good. This makes it plausible that anything that promotes our survival (or whatever) is good. But now consider how evolution influences us to act in ways that promote our survival: often when Φing promotes survival, it is adaptive for us to believe that Φing is good—this makes us more likely to Φ. But now it's much less of a surprise that many of our moral beliefs are true: when Φing promotes survival, then (a) it is good (by our assumption) and (b) we are likely to believe that it is good. That our beliefs about goodness coincide with the facts about goodness is no longer a mystery. (As Enoch acknowledges, there may still be some explaining to do. This is unimportant here.)

Wielenberg attempts to defend (some of) our knowledge of rights. Assume, he says, the substantive moral principle that one has rights whenever one has certain mental capacities (call them "C"). The precise nature of C is unimportant, except for the following sufficient condition: whenever one has the capacity to form beliefs, one has C. Now imagine that I believe that I have rights. Because I have a belief, I have C. And because I have C, I have rights. So, on the assumption of one moral principle, we get the following result: whenever I believe I have rights, I actually do. Again, on one assumption, it's no longer surprising that a large class of our moral beliefs are true.

That's a very abbreviated introduction to the third factor response to the Standard EDA. There is much more to be said about each of the two exemplar views: for example, in each case, our knowledge of a limited class of moral claims might be expanded (via,

e.g., coherence relations) to other moral claims. Furthermore, there may be ways that the standard debunker can reply to the likes of Enoch and Wielenberg (I discuss one such way in §4). But once again, it won't be easy.

This concludes my consideration of common objections to the Standard EDA. I do not claim that there are no other strong objections. These four, however, seem to me to be four of the strongest. And, as I'll show in §4, the New EDA fares better in replying to each of them.

SECTION 3: THE NEW EDA

I think that there is a distinct EDA—the New EDA—that is plausible in its own right, in addition to its advantages vis-à-vis the above objections. In this section, I'll outline the New EDA and defend its premises. Aside from the incorporation of a more complex epistemology in the New EDA, there is one basic difference between that argument and the Standard EDA. While the Standard EDA debunks moral beliefs on the basis of their *contents*, the New EDA debunks moral beliefs on the basis of a claim that they all *entail*. The Standard EDA, for example, claims that evolution selects for the disposition to judge that it's wrong not to take care of one's children, and it's on this basis that we have no knowledge of that claim. The New EDA, on the other hand, will claim that the judgment that it's wrong not to take care of one's children entails a claim belief in which is defeated. In fact, this claim, which turns out to be that categorical reasons exist, is entailed by all

positive moral claims. From this, given some plausible epistemological principles, it follows that if moral realism is true, then we have no positive moral knowledge.

Before I turn to the New EDA, let me introduce and define an integral term: "categorical reason." Defining this term is somewhat complicated by the fact that it is commonly defined in two different ways. According to the weaker definition:

> CR_1: A has a categorical reason to Φ in circumstances C iff A has a reason to Φ and any agent in C has a reason to Φ.

And according to the stronger definition:

> CR_2: A has a categorical reason to Φ in circumstances C iff A has a reason to Φ and that reason obtains regardless of what desires (broadly construed) A has or what judgments she makes.

On this second reading, categorical reasons are just what many call "external reasons" (as in Williams 1981). I believe that the New EDA can be soundly formulated on either reading, though I have CR_2 in mind in what follows.

Here is the New EDA:

The New EDA

8. Assume that moral realism is true.
9. **Empirical Premise:** Evolution has strongly influenced our belief in categorical reasons.
10. **Autonomy:** There is no independent justification for belief in categorical reasons.
11. If (9) and (10), then our belief in categorical reasons is defeated.
12. So, our belief in categorical reasons is defeated. (9,10,11)
13. All positive moral claims entail that at least one categorical reason exists, and we are justified in believing that this entailment holds.
14. If P entails Q, we are justified in believing that P entails Q, and our belief that Q is defeated, then we do not know that P.
15. So, we do not have any positive moral knowledge. (12,13,14)
16. Therefore, if moral realism is true, then we do not have any positive moral knowledge. (8,15)

In the rest of this section, I will defend (9), (10), (11), (13), and (14).

Defense of (9): The Empirical Business

(9) is an empirical premise. Since I am just a humble philosopher, I cannot mount a full defense of this premise. What I can do, however, is show why there is at least enough support for (9) for us to worry about what would follow from it. This is, after all, all the standard debunker has (Street 2006: §3).

Let me start with a clarification. To say that evolution has strongly influenced our belief in categorical reasons does not mean that evolution has caused us to believe that categorical reasons exist. "Categorical reason," after all, is a philosophical term of art. However, suppose that we had reason to think that evolution had favored humans who have a sense that there are some actions (or desires, etc.) that are favored *no matter what*. This would count as evidence of a strong evolutionary influence on our belief in categorical reasons, and thus would support (9). Henceforth, let "our belief in categorical reasons" be understood in this pre-theoretical way.

There is some reason to think such influence has occurred. The basic idea behind (9) is that those humans are more adaptive who believe that they have a reason to (e.g.) take care of their children *no matter what they desire*. Why is this? Because they will be more likely to take care of their children than if they merely desired to do so. As Richard Joyce points out, a mere *desire* to do something can easily be overridden by stronger desires, and long-term desires can be hastily re-evaluated in light of short-term desires.

Desires are, in Joyce's (2001: 136-137) terms, "unreliable things" (see also Olson 2011). We will be far more adaptive if we believe that some things are favored/required *no matter what we desire*.

Further support for (9) is based on thinking about cooperative situations that can be modelled on the Prisoner's Dilemma (James 2011: §2.6). These are cases in which multiple organisms would be better off (reproductively speaking) helping each other, but in which, if they deliberate from the standpoint of their self-interest, they rationally ought to play the free-rider. As James (2011: 59) notes, the problem in need of a solution, in such cases, is to "design individuals to establish and preserve cooperative alliances *despite* the temptation not to cooperate." A community of individuals who have some mechanism that *trumps* their desires in favor of cooperative action will do better, reproductively speaking, than a community of individuals that does not. Such a mechanism is provided by a sense of having *categorical reason* to follow through on promises, to help those who help you, etc. With such a sense, even where you believe that it would be in your best interest to defect, you won't. In sum, we seem to have enough reason to believe (9) that we should worry about what follows from it.

Defense of (10): No Independent Justification

So let's assume that evolution has strongly influenced our belief in categorical reasons. Now I want to show that there is no independent justification for belief in categorical reasons. First off, what does it mean for a justification to be independent? A

justification for belief in categorical reasons is independent iff it doesn't rely on either (a) our intuitions about what categorical reasons we have, or on (b) our belief or intuition that P, where P would entail the existence of a categorical reason.

And, as it turns out, there is no such justification. For brevity's sake, I'll consider here just one well-known argument for categorical reasons. I footnote a second, for variety's sake, at the end of the section. Consider David Enoch's (2011: 261-262) "Sufficiently Bad Bad-Guy" argument against existence-internalism—the thesis that one has a reason to Φ only if there is a sound deliberative route from one's existing motivations to one's Φing. Imagine that Sufficiently Bad Bad-Guy has no desire that would be promoted, even under ideal deliberative conditions, by refraining from harming Victim. Enoch argues:

17. If existence-internalism is true, then Sufficiently Bad Bad-Guy has no reason not to hurt Victim.
18. But clearly Sufficiently Bad Bad-Guy *does* have a reason not to hurt Victim.
19. Therefore, existence-internalism is false.

(17) follows from our supposition that Sufficiently Bad Bad-Guy has no desire which would be served by refraining from hurting Victim, even under ideal deliberative conditions. But, so (18) claims, he *does* have a reason not to perform said heinous act. So, he must have a reason that obtains regardless of his desires, and that entails the existence of at least one categorical reason.

The problem, however, is apparent. The plausibility of (18) depends on our intuition that Sufficiently Bad Bad-Guy has a categorical reason not to hurt Victim. The intuition that supports (18) is the same intuition that I would defend by saying "No, Sufficiently Bad

Bad-Guy has a reason not to hurt Victim, *no matter what*!" In fact, if I understand who Sufficiently Bad Bad-Guy is, and I understand what a categorical reason is, then I can't believe (18) without believing that his reason not to hurt Victim is a categorical one. So this argument for categorical reasons doesn't give us *independent* justification for belief in them, whatever its other merits are as an argument.[4]

Perhaps there are some arguments for the existence of categorical reasons that are entirely distinct from both that given in the text and in footnote 3, but I am unaware of them. Such arguments, I suspect, would not constitute independent justification of belief in categorical reasons; but then again, I would have to see the arguments first.

Defense of (11): Why Evolutionary Pressures Defeat Belief

So now let's assume that (9) and (10) are plausible. What follows from their conjunction? In (11) we get an answer analogous to (1), the epistemological premise of the Standard EDA: if (9) and (10)—and assuming moral realism—then our belief in categorical reasons is defeated. All I mean by such "defeat" is the classic notion from epistemology. A defeater D for A's belief that P is a true proposition such that if A justifiably believed that D, then A would be unjustified in believing that P. When D obtains, we can say that A's belief that P is defeated. One standard example is a Gettier case: you

[4] Shafer-Landau (2009) gives an independent argument for categorical reasons: the "fanatic" has no commitment promoted by not perpetrating an act of terror, and so has no non-categorical reason not to do so. However, since he is intuitively blameworthy, he must have a categorical reason to refrain. Yet, whereas Enoch's argument violates (a) in the definition of independence, Shafer-Landau's relies on an intuition that something obtains (the fanatic's blameworthiness) that would entail the existence of a categorical reason, violating (b) in the definition of independence.

have a true, justified belief that it is 10:39, based on your view of a clock that reads "10:39." But your belief may even now be defeated, since the clock you're looking at is broken and you just happened to look at it when it read correctly. The proposition "The clock is broken" is a defeater for your belief that it is 10:39 because, if you justifiably believed that the clock was broken, you would not be justified in the belief that it is 10:39.

I said above that there are many ways of arguing for the epistemological premise of the Standard EDA, giving *Insensitivity* as a notable example. The same is true regarding (11), I suspect. (Since the New EDA is, well, new, I cannot appeal to notable defenses of that premise.) In this section I will offer just one defense of (11), based on an argument from insensitivity. Though I do in fact think that this argument is sound, there may well be other appealing defenses of the premise.

Here is the argument, which runs along the same lines as *Insensitivity*:

New Insensitivity

20. If (9) evolution has strongly influenced our belief in categorical reasons and (10) there is no independent justification for belief in categorical reasons, then for any agent A, A would believe in categorical reasons regardless of whether they exist or not.
21. If A would believe that P regardless of whether P, then A's belief that P is defeated.
22. Therefore, if (9) and (10), then for any agent A, then A's belief in categorical reasons is defeated.

The justification for (20) runs roughly as follows. Evolution selects for adaptive traits, and your belief that you have a categorical reason to (say) take care of your children would be adaptive regardless of whether you *actually do* have such a reason. The belief that there are any categorical reasons at all is similarly adaptive (and thus selected for) because without it, you could not believe that you have any *particular* categorical reason. Now, a

belief that P can be strongly influenced by such a truth-insensitive cause and yet still be sensitive to the truth—if the agent in question has some independent justification for the belief that P (e.g., God has told him that P), and his belief is also strongly influenced by this consideration. However, when there is a truth-insensitive cause of our belief that P—as evolution is, in this case—and there is no independent justification for believing that P, we would believe it regardless of whether P.[5]

(21) seems to me an eminently plausible epistemological principle. When I would believe that P no matter whether P, this counts as a defeater for my belief that P. That is, if I would believe that P regardless of its truth, and if on top of that I justifiably believed this about myself, then I would not be justified in my belief that P. Suppose I believe that I'm a great basketball player. Then I find out (with justification) that, due to my immense self-confidence, I would believe this regardless of whether it was true or false. I would no longer be justified in my belief that I am a great basketball player. (Notice that I am not committed to the claim that, when A's belief that P is insensitive, it is *unjustified*.)

Defense of (13): Moral Claims Entail Categorical Reasons

Call the thesis that all positive moral claims entail that *some particular* categorical reason exists "the entailment claim." The entailment claim entails (13), since (i) if all positive moral claims entail the existence of some particular categorical reason, then they

[5] To avoid problems resulting from the metaphysical necessity of some moral claims, we should understand the counterfactuals here to quantify over all *conceptually* possible worlds, as in Clarke-Doane (2012): 320-321.

entail that at least one categorical reason exists, and (ii) an argument that all positive moral claims entail the existence of at least one categorical reason is also an argument that we are justified in believing this to be true. So I need to show here that, if moral realism is true, then the entailment claim is true. I'll give two arguments to this effect. But first let me clarify the entailment claim. Consider the following four attenuations of it:

- The entailment claim does not mean that each positive moral claim entails a categorical reason to *do* anything. I might have a categorical reason to *feel* a certain way, or to *desire* something in particular. E.g., that some act is generous may entail that I have a categorical reason to like when people perform that act.
- The entailment claim does not mean that each attribution of a given moral property M entails a categorical reason to do (or feel, desire, etc.) the same thing in every situation. That some act is M may give me a categorical reason to Φ in one situation and Ψ in another. E.g., that some act is generous may in one instance give me categorical reason to perform it; in another circumstance it may give me categorical reason to help someone perform it.
- The entailment claim does not mean that each positive moral claim entails an *all-things-considered* categorical reason. Positive moral claims often entail only *pro tanto* reasons. E.g., that some act is generous may give me *pro tanto* categorical reason to perform it, although I have *trumping* reasons to refrain.
- The entailment claim does not mean that any agent with a positive moral belief also believes that some categorical reason exists. For all it says, even agents who are fully competent with moral concepts may be unaware of the entailment claim.

So in sum, all positive moral claims entail a *pro tanto* categorical reason to Φ, where Φ is not necessarily an action and can vary across situations for a given moral claim. Finally, even where a positive moral claim is true, it is possible that not all agents who are competent with moral concepts will be aware of this entailment. Since each positive moral claim entails that *some particular* categorical reason obtains, each also entails that at least one categorical reason obtains. So, if the entailment claim is true, then (13) is true.

There has been some dispute over the entailment claim—mostly within the debate over moral error theory. There are many who think that the entailment claim is true—that, in fact, it is a conceptual truth (Olson 2011; Joyce 2001: 175-177).[6] Yet there are also some who deny it (Foot 1972; Finlay 2008). Such denial is not worrisome for my argument here, because the arguments against the entailment claim rely on premises inimical to moral realism (as in Finlay 2008). My claim is that *if moral realism is true*, then the entailment claim is true (although not necessarily conceptually true).

I'll give two arguments for the entailment claim. The first is the weakest, and it comes cheaply. Consider: what is it that makes moral claims *moral*, and not some other type of claim? It can't be their normativity: prudential claims are normative, as are some epistemic claims. Nor can it be that they are other-directed: many claims about etiquette are other-directed. The entailment claim provides an answer: what makes moral claims moral is that they entail categorical reasons. I will leave this as a speculation (although see Joyce 2011, who agrees with me on this point)—whether the distinction between moral

[6] Outside of debates about error theory, I think Parfit (2011: 283-288) is committed to the entailment claim, and Enoch (2011: 94) expresses sympathy for it.

and non-moral claims is important, and whether there are other plausible ways to draw the distinction, are beyond my ken.

What I consider a second, stronger argument for the entailment claim relies directly on the commitments of moral realism. Without the entailment claim, we cannot explain the type of authority that moral claims have, *according to realists*. This is clearest in the types of cases that Enoch is considering. Sufficiently Bad Bad-Guy has reason not to hurt Victim. But according to the moral realist, his reason not to hurt Victim is not conditional on his having an interest in Victim's continued well-being, or on his desire not to see anyone suffer, or on any judgment that he makes. He shouldn't do it *no matter what*! Even claims about what would be virtuous, or what states of affairs are good, have distinctive authority over us. Whatever the generosity of an action gives you reason to do/feel/think/etc., this reason is not contingent on your having any specific desires or judgments. This authority that moral claims have over us, according to realists, is explained only by their entailing categorical reasons (for similar points, see Parfit 2011: 283-288 and Joyce 2001: ch. 2).

Think of the matter a different way, via example. At the very *least*, if moral realism is true, then when some act is generous one has categorical reason to perform it in certain counterfactual situations. Surely if some act is generous, then *ceteris paribus*—i.e., where no energy is lost on your part by performing it that wouldn't otherwise be lost, where you sacrifice nothing that you want by performing it, etc.—you have a categorical reason to perform it. In the specified situation, anyone, *no matter what they desire or judge*, has a reason to act generously. Similarly, assume that the absence of physical conflict is good. If we consider a situation where, by the press of a button, you can make it the case that

physical conflict is avoided, and where it otherwise wouldn't be, and where furthermore there are no competing goods that are sacrificed by one's pushing the button—well, don't we have reason, no matter what we desire, to push the button? If so, then if moral realism is true, even such positive moral claims as these entail the existence of a categorical reason.

Anti-realists are not similarly committed to the entailment claim—at least not all of them. Consider Streetian constructivism: the fact that A has a reason to Φ is constituted by the fact that the proposition "A has a reason to Φ" is entailed by A's other judgments about reasons, the non-normative facts, and the constitutive standards for judgments about reasons (Street 2009; Street 2010; Street 2012; Street forthcoming). Street-type constructivism actually entails the falsity of the entailment claim, when that claim is read according to CR_2. According to the Street-type constructivist, if moral claims entail reasons at all, they can't be categorical reasons—all of A's reasons are *constituted* by facts about what normative judgments she makes, and so clearly do not obtain regardless of what judgments she makes. The upshot of all this is that moral realists are committed to the entailment claim, and thus (13), while at least some anti-realist views—I suspect most—are not.

But perhaps, after all that I've said, there are still those who think that they can be moral realists without committing to the entailment claim. Yet even if so, the New EDA will simply apply to the type of realism committed to the entailment claim. And any type of realism that is not so committed will have a new problem: that of either explaining the authority of moral claims, or explaining away the appearance of such.

Defense of (14): The Epistemological Business

We can't get the conclusion of the New EDA without some principle linking the defeat of belief in an entailed claim with lack of knowledge of the claim doing the entailing. In other words, we need (14): If P entails Q, we are justified in believing that P entails Q, and our belief that Q is defeated, then we do not know that P. However, that claim is not only plausible on its face, but it follows from two other epistemological premises, each even more plausible than (14).

Here's the argument:

23. If my belief that P is defeated, then I do not know that P.
24. If P entails Q, we are justified in believing that P entails Q, and our belief that Q is defeated, then our belief that P is defeated.
25. Therefore, if P entails Q, and our belief that Q is defeated, then we do not know that P.

There are controversial claims that rely on (23)—e.g., attempts to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge. But (23) merely asserts a necessary condition on knowledge, and that is not controversial at all (Klein 1971; Lehrer and Paxson 1969). It serves as a good explanation of why, in at least some Gettier cases, the agent does not have knowledge: there's some true proposition that, if the agent justifiably believed it, would entail that her belief is unjustified.

(24) is simply a closure principle for defeat, and it seems as plausible as any non-trivial epistemological principle. Here's an example that may help to illustrate that plausibility. Suppose I look at the clock and, seeing that it reads "2:14," conclude that it is

afternoon. But the clock is broken, which defeats my belief that it is afternoon. I also believe that it is 2:14 p.m., which entails that it is afternoon. (24) says that, in this situation, my belief that it is 2:14 p.m. is also defeated.

I see no need to defend (24) further, since it is so plausible. But it just so happens that there is a valid argument for it, which only depends on a closure principle for justification:

Closure$_J$: If P entails Q, and I am justified in believing that P entails Q, then if my belief that Q is unjustified, then my belief that P is unjustified.

I leave the defense of Closure$_J$ to others (Hawthorne 2004: ch. 1). Suffice it to say that it is as plausible a (non-trivial) principle as they come in epistemology.

The argument for (24) is fairly complex. In what follows, recall that when A's belief that P is defeated, there is some true proposition D such that, if A justifiably believed that D, then A would be unjustified in believing that P. The following argument actually shows something more specific than (24), but which entails (24)—that the same defeater that defeats belief that Q also defeats belief that P.

26. P entails Q, I am justified in believing this, and my belief that Q is defeated.
    (Assumption)
27. P entails Q.
    (&Elim 26)
28. There is some true proposition D and if I justifiably believed that D, then I would not be justified in believing that Q.
    (from 26)
29. There is some true proposition D.
    (&Elim 28)
30. If I justifiably believed that D, then I would not be justified in believing that Q.
    (&Elim 28)
31. I am justified in believing that D.
    (Assumption)

32. I am not justified in believing that Q.
    (→Elim 30, 31)
33. If P entails Q, I am justified I believing this, and I am not justified in believing that Q, then I am not justified in believing that P.
    (Closure$_J$)
34. I am justified in believing that P entails Q.
    (&Elim 26)
35. P entails Q, I am justified in believing this, and I am not justified in believing that Q.
    (&Intro 27, 32, 34)
36. I am not justified in believing that P.
    (→Elim 33, 35)
37. If I am justified in believing that D, then I am not justified in believing that P.
    (→Intro 31, 36)
38. There is some true proposition D and if I am justified in believing that D, then I am not justified in believing that P (i.e., my belief that P is defeated).
    (&Intro 29, 37)
39. Therefore, if P entails Q, I am justified in believing this, and my belief that Q is defeated, then my belief that P is defeated.
    (→Intro 26, 38)

The argument is sound so long as Closure$_J$ is true—as it almost surely is.

In this section, I've defended the premises of the New EDA. I believe that defense has been successful, though merely suggestive at points (e.g., the empirical business). So at this point, it seems that realists ought to worry about whether the empirical premise is true.

SECTION 4: REVISITING THE OBJECTIONS TO THE STANDARD EDA

In this section, I argue that on top of the New EDA's independent plausibility, it has far better replies than the Standard EDA to the four objections above. I'll argue that

the New EDA has decisive replies to the first two objections, while it has distinct advantages over the Standard EDA with regard to the latter two.

The New EDA's Replies to the First Two Objections

Recall the limited explanation objection: it hinged on the claim that there are some moral beliefs that do not easily admit of an evolutionary explanation. However, the New EDA can grant this. It's empirical premise claims only the belief that categorical reasons exist has been strongly influenced by evolution. The Standard EDA's empirical premise, on the other hand, claims that many different (moral) beliefs have been so influenced. If evolution has strongly influenced our moral faculties *in doxastically discriminating ways*, then we should expect (at the very least) most of our moral beliefs to be adaptive. This makes it easy for the realist to find moral beliefs that are not likely to have emerged as a result of adaptive pressures, thus causing the standard debunker worry in proportion to the number of non-adaptive beliefs on display. The empirical premise of the New EDA is not open to such criticism. It relies only on the claim that *one* belief is adaptive, and it turns out to be clear how that belief would be adaptive. Let the contents of positive moral beliefs be what they may—e.g., what exactly we ought to do, or what acts are generous—the New EDA still entails that there is no moral knowledge.

The independent confirmation objection, recall, was that we can independently confirm a doxastic faculty if we can show that it is identical to or a species of a type of faculty we know to be reliable, regardless of whether our moral faculties are reliable. It is

clear why this objection does not apply to the New EDA: I am not targeting our moral faculties at all! Rather, I claim that a *particular belief* is defeated, since it was formed in a way that is not sensitive to the truth, and I derive the lack of positive moral knowledge from the defeat of this one belief. So Shafer-Landau's objection just does not apply to the New EDA.

One might think that my reply here is cheap, and that regardless of whether the objection applies to the New EDA, Shafer-Landau can show that our moral faculties are reliable. Doesn't the reliability of our moral faculties outweigh (in some sense) the defeat of something entailed by our positive moral beliefs? If so, we could have positive moral knowledge even where our positive moral beliefs entailed a defeated belief. But this is no good. Even if we grant that our moral faculties are a species of some generally reliable faculty, this gives us merely *pro tanto* reason to trust them. If our moral beliefs are defeated—as I have argued they are—then we no longer have reason to trust them. As the plane crash survivor trudges through the desert, he may have *pro tanto* reason to trust his beliefs about the convenience store he seems to see up ahead, since he knows that his faculty of vision is generally reliable. But that reason can be undermined if he learns that this particular belief is defeated—here the defeater is the claim that in circumstances such as those our survivor is in, we often seem to see things that aren't there. In the same way, even if Shafer-Landau is right, his objection does nothing to threaten the New EDA. We could start with *pro tanto* reason to trust our moral faculties, but if I'm right, we still have no positive moral knowledge.

The New EDA's Reply to the Overgeneralization Objection

The New EDA has an important advantage over the Standard EDA in replying to the overgeneralization objection. Recall the objection: if evolutionary pressures undermine moral knowledge on the assumption of moral realism, then they also undermine perceptual (or mathematical) knowledge on the assumption of perceptual (or mathematical) realism. It might seem that both EDAs are equally susceptible to the objection: after all, both claim that evolutionary influence of some kind undermines knowledge. And neither EDA has some special capacity to deny evolutionary influence on our perceptual or mathematical faculties or beliefs. So, perhaps both EDAs overgeneralize, if either does.

However, I think that the New EDA has at least the following advantage in replying to the objection: whereas the Standard EDA targets our moral faculties in general, the New EDA targets a particular belief. But it seems that, if there has been evolutionary influence in the perceptual or mathematical realm, it has largely been influence on the respective *faculties*. No particular perceptual belief seems to have been selected for (e.g., that there is a table in front of me): such beliefs seem far too fine-grained to be the object of direct evolutionary influence. Similarly for mathematical beliefs: e.g., the belief that 679 – 456 = 223 is not directly selected for. And this means that the Standard EDA overgeneralizes to these realms, since it claims that evolutionary influence on a *faculty* means that the beliefs produced by that faculty don't count as knowledge. The New EDA, on the other hand, claims only that *direct* evolutionary influence on a belief means that that very belief does

not count as knowledge. It can allow that *indirect* evolutionary influence on a belief (via influence on the faculty that produced that belief) doesn't undermine knowledge.

One might worry that the New EDA will still overgeneralize if perceptual or mathematical claims entailed the existence of a categorical reason. But such an entailment does not obtain. That 2 + 2 = 4 does not entail the existence of a categorical reason. Neither does the claim that there is a table in front of me. These are just not the *kind* of facts that entail any kind of reasons: whereas claims about reasons are normative, these are purely non-normative claims. And of course, it's a commonplace in ethics (and normative theory in general) that a normative claim does not follow from a purely non-normative claim.

For these reasons, I think that the New EDA has a better reply to the overgeneralization objection than does the Standard EDA. But unlike the New EDA's responses to the first two objections, the response here does not seem utterly conclusive. So I claim only that the New EDA's reply is superior to the Standard EDA's, not that it is ultimately successful.

The New EDA's Reply to Third Factor Views

Recall the general form of a third factor response: each generally starts by assuming a substantive moral principle. It then shows how evolution predictably brings us to have (at least some) true moral beliefs, even though it doesn't select for the *truth* of those beliefs. I am not convinced that either EDA has a knock-down reply to this type of objection. However, it seems to me that the most promising reply available to either EDA works much

better for the New EDA than for the Standard EDA, and in this respect the former is better off than the latter.

If any EDA is to stand against third factor responses, it must be because those responses *beg the question* against the relevant EDA. Several philosophers have argued that this is indeed the case, with regard to the Standard EDA (Shafer-Landau 2012: 33-34; Behrends 2013: 7-8; Horn forthcoming; Vavova 2014: 81; Vavova 2015: 111-112). It's easiest to see why when we look at Enoch's view, which assumes that survival is good. Belief in this claim has a clear evolutionary explanation (this is, in fact, integral to the success of Enoch's reply). This belief is thus part of the target of the Standard EDA: it is such claims that the argument attempts to show that we can't know, if realism is true. But surely we shouldn't crucially rely on our belief that P, when replying to an argument that purports to show that we don't know that P! So, Enoch shouldn't rely on the claim that survival is good, since the Standard EDA attempts to show that he doesn't know this.

Consider the following analogy: you know that taking a certain pill will cause you to believe that Napoleon won the Battle of Waterloo (Joyce 2007: 179-180). You know that you have taken such a pill. Are you rationally permitted to rely on your belief that Napoleon won Waterloo in assessing whether you know that Napoleon won Waterloo? Of course not—to do so would assume the very knowledge in question. For the same reason, we cannot assume the truth of any positive moral claim when assessing whether we have any positive moral knowledge.

My goal here is not to prove that this strategy for replying to third factor views is ultimately viable. That would require fuller argument. But I do hope it's clear that this is

the best option for the standard debunker to take in replying to third factor views. The jig is up, so to speak, if the standard debunker allows her critic to appeal to some positive moral claims in his response (although for an independent line of objection, see Joyce 2016).

However, when applying this argumentative strategy, the standard debunker will run into a problem that the new debunker won't. To see why, let's look to Wielenberg's third factor response. His substantive moral principle is that any person with C has rights. But notice: this is precisely the sort of claim that seems incapable of direct evolutionary explanation, since it's unclear why it would be adaptive to believe it. In fact, it might be downright *dis*advantageous: if I have the belief in question, in many circumstances I will put my kin on equal standing with those who are completely unrelated to me, lowering the chances of passing on my genes. In this way, the standard debunker's appeal to the question-begging strategy depends crucially on her ability to reply to the limited explanation objection.

To state the point modestly: it is unclear whether evolution has had a strong influence on our belief that all beings with C have rights. And it seems to me that, in such a situation, it is permissible to rely on this belief in replying to the Standard EDA. Return to our analogy: Wielenberg's case is like not having good reason to believe that you have taken the Napoleon Pill. In such a situation, it is plausible that you *can* rationally rely on your belief that Napoleon won Waterloo. So, the Standard EDA is susceptible to at least one third factor response *even if we grant that others (like Enoch's) are question-begging.*

However, we have seen that the New EDA targets all moral beliefs and is therefore immune to the limited explanation objection. For this reason, both third factor responses under consideration will beg the question against it, if either does. So will most third factor views, since most assume a positive moral claim. But the New EDA has it that all moral claims entail a categorical reason, which (long story short) means that we can't have knowledge of any positive moral claim. So, all third factor views that assume a substantive normative claim—including both Wielenberg's and Enoch's—will beg the question against the New EDA by assuming what it purports to disprove: that we have any positive moral knowledge. So in sum, the Standard EDA has a vulnerability to third factor views that the New EDA does not. It is a derivative vulnerability—deriving from the Standard EDA's vulnerability to the limited explanation objection—but a vulnerability nonetheless.

The New EDA's reply here is not decisive. It depends on whether the question-begging reply works in general; it is also vulnerable to any third factor response which can manage not to assume a positive moral claim, such as Behrends (2013). But the New EDA has a very important advantage over the Standard EDA in replying to third factor views, just as it does in replying to all of the objections mentioned here.

CONCLUSION

The fact that evolution has strongly influenced our moral beliefs seems worrying, at first glance, if the moral facts don't depend constitutively on our attitudes. However, there are some deep problems that face the standard formulation of the argument. The New

EDA, which I have presented here, gives an independently plausible line of argument that avoids many of the problems with the Standard EDA. If that argument works, then moral realism entails moral skepticism—an intolerably high price for realists to pay. I cannot say here conclusively whether the argument succeeds—the state of empirical work is incomplete, and there are further questions to be answered regarding the overgeneralization and third factor objections. What I can say, however, is that this is a seriously worrisome argument for realists—far more worrisome than the Standard EDA.[7]

[7] For helpful feedback, I would like to thank Sinan Dogramaci, Casey Hart, Alex Hyun, Eric Sampson, Mark Schroeder, Russ Shafer-Landau, Sharon Street, two anonymous referees, and all the participants of the 2015 Texas Tech Graduate Conference on metaethics.

Chapter 2: When Do Replies to the Evolutionary Debunking Argument Against Moral Realism Beg the Question?[8]

INTRODUCTION

According to a popular objection to moral realism, evolutionary forces have influenced our moral beliefs in such a way that, if realism is true, then we have no moral knowledge. But there are many defenders of realism who not only think that the objection fails, but in arguing that it fails *rely on the very moral beliefs that are under attack.* This has ignited a debate over whether such replies beg the question, with realists arguing that if such replies are off-limits in the moral case, then a far more general brand of skepticism follows.

In this paper, I give a probabilistic account of what's objectionable about replies that rely on moral beliefs. I argue that the probabilistic account entails that certain realists (but not others) beg the question by relying on moral beliefs in their replies, and it does not objectionably overgeneralize. The probabilistic account thus allows the debunker to argue against only a certain type of realism. I conclude by considering whether the account debunks logical and mathematical realism, and whether, if so, that is a problem for the debunking argument against moral realism.

[8] Based on Justin Morton (forthcoming) "When Do Replies to the Evolutionary Debunking Argument Against Moral Realism Beg the Question?" *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*: 1-16.

SECTION 1: SOME BACKGROUND

Worries about evolutionary influence on our moral beliefs go back to Darwin himself [1871: 102]. But they have recently been harnessed into a fairly sophisticated argument against moral realism [Ruse and Wilson 1986; Street 2006; Joyce 2006; Kitcher 2007; Greene 2008; Morton 2016; Horn 2017]. Moral realism is the thesis that (i) sincere moral judgments express beliefs, (ii) some of those beliefs are true, and (iii) the truth of moral beliefs does not constitutively depend on the attitude of any actual or hypothetical agent [see Shafer-Landau 2012: 1]. Here's what I take to be the heart of the challenge:

> *The Standard EDA*
> 1. **Epistemological Premise:** If moral realism is true and evolution has strongly influenced our moral faculties in such-and-such a way, then we have no substantive moral knowledge.
> 2. **Empirical Premise:** Evolution has strongly influenced our moral faculties in such-and-such a way.
> 3. Therefore, if moral realism is true, then we have no substantive moral knowledge.

Two notes about the argument: first, as a simplifying assumption, let us suppose that there is no confirmation of the reliability of our moral faculties that is independent of those faculties themselves [Shafer-Landau 2012: 4-5; Vavova 2014: 81]. Second, how 'such-and-such a way' ought to be articulated is independent of whether the type of replies I'll consider here work: those replies do not take issue with the way debunkers say evolution has influenced our moral faculties, so I will not address that issue here.

Many think that the best sort of reply for the realist is what I will call a *first-order reply*. A first-order reply is one that crucially assumes a substantive moral claim in replying to the Standard EDA. (On this definition, so-called 'third-factor responses' are a proper

subset of first-order replies.) What makes a moral claim substantive is hard to say: 'Discrimination on the basis of race is bad' is substantive; 'Either Bob's discrimination was bad or it's not the case that it was bad' is not.[9]

Enoch, for example, assumes that our survival, and thus whatever promotes it, are at least somewhat good.[10] But often when Φing promotes survival, it is adaptive for us to believe that Φing is good—this makes us more likely to Φ. Yet now it's much less of a surprise that many of our moral beliefs are true: when Φing promotes survival, then not only is it good, but we are likely to believe that it is good. So, on one substantive moral assumption, we see that our moral beliefs coincide with the facts.

Karl Schafer gives a different sort of first-order reply (we may here ignore his broader focus on *normative* knowledge). In discussing the non-normative properties that our normative faculties track, he argues that in many cases:

> These are all properties that we do, upon reflection, take to have normative significance. So in all these cases, our considered normative judgment is that the factors that shaped the development of our normative faculties do in fact have the relevant sort of normative significance. Thus, these judgments, plus evolutionary theory, do not immediately give us any reason to be sceptical of these faculties. [2010: 477]

Here, Schafer employs a much broader first-order approach than Enoch: he assumes reliability concerning substantive moral claims in general.

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[9] We don't need a precise definition: debunkers are targeting knowledge of claims like the first example, but not the second. Let the substantive moral claims be the ones knowledge of which debunkers are targeting.

[10] Enoch [2011: sec. 7.4.3]. Enoch thinks that the Standard EDA is an instance of a more general objection: that normative realists cannot explain the striking correlation between the normative facts and our normative beliefs. Enoch could still be replying to the Standard EDA: he'll read 'such-and-such a way' as 'in such a way as to produce a striking correlation of fact and belief'.

There are many other first-order replies, but we need not explore them here [Dworkin 1996: 125; Wielenberg 2010; Brosnan 2011; Parfit 2011: 532-533; Skarsaune 2011; Setiya 2012: ch. 2]. Debunkers rightly find something fishy about such replies: they seem to assume exactly what is in question [Gibbard 2003: ch. 13; Shafer-Landau 2012: 33-34; Behrends 2013: 7-8; Vavova 2014: 81; Vavova 2015: 111-112; Horn 2017; Street forthcoming: 25-28]! Street calls first-order replies 'trivially question-begging', arguing:

> The general question we are asking . . . is "Why think that the causes described by our best scientific explanations would have led us to the truth in this domain?" In answer to this question, it is unsatisfactory to reply, "My judgments in this domain are true, and they're also the ones that the causes described by our best scientific explanations led me to." Such a reply offers no *reason* for thinking that the causes led us to the truth; it merely reasserts that they did.
> [forthcoming: 26]

It is not hard to sympathize with the intuition here.

The proponent of the first-order reply, however, argues that such question-begging is not problematic, since it is necessary in order to reply to skeptical worries in other domains [Bedke 2009: sec. 3.2; Schafer 2010: 475-476; Enoch 2011: 175; White 2011: sec. 4.2; Clarke-Doane 2012; Setiya 2012: 79; Shafer-Landau 2012: 21-23; Berker 2014: sec. 8; Vavova 2014: sec. 3.1; Dogramaci 2016]. Take the perceptual case. If, in response to some skeptical worry, we want to vindicate our perceptual capacities, we have to allow from the start that our perceptual seemings warrant the belief that things are as they seem (see Pryor [2000]). More specifically, if we want to avoid an EDA for perceptual realism, we need to show how evolution would select truth-tracking perceptual faculties. But of course, this requires warrant for the beliefs about evolutionary theory and the relevant observations, which of course relies on our perceptual beliefs. It looks like we can

permissibly assume some perceptual beliefs in reply to perceptual skepticism. (Similar worries hold in the logical, mathematical, and inductive domains.)

So the debunker has a very pointed task in front of her: her account must make it plausible that first-order replies beg the question, while still allowing a non-question-begging route to knowledge in any domain where it's clear that realism is true and we have knowledge of the relevant truths. Such an account of 'question-begging' need not—and in my preferred account will not—be a satisfactory account of the *general* nature of begging the question. It need only entail that first-order replies are overall objectionable without overgeneralizing.

Yet debunkers have failed to give such an account, nor have they tried. While two philosophers have offered accounts of begging the question, these accounts are not favorable to the debunker. Setiya offers the following sufficient condition for begging the question:

> QB_S: A reply to some skeptical worry begs the question if it treats a belief as evidence of its own truth, or an appearance as evidence for the reliability of appearances [2012: 81-82].

Dogramaci offers a different sufficient condition:

> QB_D: A reply to some skeptical worry begs the question if (i) the reply uses the method under scrutiny to supply the premises that X, that Y, and that Z, and (ii) that X & Y & Z entails most of the propositions the method leads you to believe [2016: 12].[11]

[11] I use the 'partial formulation' for simplicity.

Setiya argues that first-order replies need not meet the antecedent of QB_S, while Dogramaci argues that QB_D overgeneralizes. So neither account will help the debunker. The debunker must come up with a new one. In the next section, that is just what I'll do.

SECTION 2: TRUTH SELECTION

If we can give an evolutionary explanation of our perceptual faculties, why aren't our perceptual beliefs debunked? One initially appealing answer is that while our moral faculties seem to have been selected only because they are disposed to produce beliefs with certain *contents*, our perceptual faculties seem to have been selected because they are disposed to produce *true* beliefs. Consider: it would be adaptive to believe that we ought to take care of our children regardless of whether it actually is wrong. Evolution selected faculties that would generate this belief because of its propensity to bring about our children's survival, regardless of whether it is true. On the other hand, in most cases it is only adaptive to believe that there is a tiger in front of me if there actually *is* a tiger in front of me. If there weren't, evolution would be much less likely to produce faculties that would generate this belief. It seems as if we can explain why we have reliable perceptual faculties—that is, perceptual faculties that reliably produce true perceptual beliefs—in a way we can't for our moral faculties.

However, in order to avoid over-generalization, our account of what makes a reply to skepticism about domain D question-begging should also allow for the reliance on D-beliefs. So, I propose the following sufficient condition for begging the question:

Truth Selection: A reply to some skeptical worry begs the question if, having assumed the substantive claims in question, it at best explains why we have the cognitive faculties we have, and entails that they are reliable, but does not explain why we ended up with some reliable faculties.

(Schechter [2010] presents a similar constraint. See also Faraci [manuscript] and Lutz [manuscript].) I will argue that if Truth Selection is true, then an important class of first-order replies beg the question, without overgeneralizing.

Intuitively, first-order replies do not explain why we ended up with some reliable faculties. Schafer's response, for example, boils down to the idea that evolution resulted in faculties disposed to produce certain beliefs, and these beliefs are true—there is no more substantive connection between their truth and our believing them. And equally intuitively, once we assume a small number of perceptual claims, it seems clear that our perceptual faculties were selected because they were reliable: it is adaptive to believe a tiger is in front of you because there is a tiger in front of you.

But these intuitions may seem weak, and at any rate they may be weaker in non-moral domains aside from the perceptual domain. It will be helpful to get a better sense of the epistemic problem involved in not explaining why we ended up with some reliable faculties. That's what I'll do in the remainder of this section, by trying to find a necessary condition on explaining why certain faculties are reliable. Debunkers will need first-order replies to fail this necessary condition, while replies in other domains do not.

One might be tempted to understand Truth Selection modally. Here are three modal claims which might constitute necessary conditions on explaining why we ended up with

some reliable faculties. When a reply explains why we ended up with some reliable faculties, then for at least most beliefs produced by such faculties, we believe that P and:

Safety: In the nearest possible worlds in which we believe that P, P is true [Sosa 1999; Setiya 2012; Clarke-Doane 2017].

Adherence: In the nearest possible worlds in which P is true, we believe that P [Nozick 1981: 176-177; Setiya 2012].

Sensitivity: In the nearest possible worlds in which P is false, we do not believe that P [Nozick 1981: 172-173; Sosa 1999; Clarke-Doane 2017].

The debunker needs a condition that both (i) actually constitutes a necessary condition on explaining why our faculties are reliable, and (ii) is a condition that first-order replies will fail.

It's not at all clear that any of these modal conditions can meet those two criteria. Here I'll give some reasons for worry, with regard to each. My aim is not to show that each condition fails to meet both (i) and (ii), but rather to show that these modal conditions are at least *prima facie* worrisome in ways that my approach is not.

The root of the worry with Safety and Adherence is the same: that at least our beliefs in fundamental moral principles, when true, are necessarily true. Let's assume the following picture, which while simplistic, goes wrong only in harmless ways: principles are of the form $\forall x(Dx \rightarrow Mx)$, where 'Dx' is a non-moral predicate and 'Mx' is a moral one. Some moral principles are fundamental—they do not obtain in virtue of any further moral (or normative) facts/truths. These are the best candidates for being necessarily true, since any particular moral truth (read this as: 'non-principle') will be contingent upon (contingent) non-moral truths.

Our beliefs in the fundamental moral principles will be safe and adhere. They will be safe trivially, in fact: since they are true in all possible worlds, they are true in the nearest worlds where we believe them. They will also adhere: the nearest worlds where a necessarily true proposition is true are just the nearest worlds simpliciter. And in those worlds, evolution selects for the moral faculties it actually selected for, and we end up believing the same moral principles.

But most of our moral beliefs are not about fundamental principles. They are about whether Hillary is a good person or whether we ought to donate to relief efforts for the latest hurricane. These moral beliefs are contingently true: it's contingent that Hillary has the characteristics that make someone a good person, or that the hurricane hits a populated area. Are these beliefs safe? Do they adhere? If not, the debunker could argue that Safety or Adherence is a necessary condition on explaining why we ended up with some reliable faculties, and that our moral beliefs generally fail this condition (even though a small class of our beliefs meet it).

But I am skeptical that this will work. We've already seen that our beliefs in fundamental moral beliefs adhere and are safe. We should assume that in general, our non-moral beliefs (the ones about morally relevant matters, at least) also adhere and are safe. (The debunker is not, after all, interested in general skeptical worries about our non-moral beliefs.) But if our beliefs about the fundamental principles are safe, and our beliefs about the relevant non-moral matters are safe, then we should expect our particular moral beliefs to be safe, generally speaking. And the same goes for adherence.

The ‘generally speaking’ there is important: safety is not closed under safe entailment, nor is adherence closed under adhering entailment. But consider an example: I believe that Hillary is a good person because she exhibits deeply-ingrained character traits XYZ. My evidence that she has XYZ is stable—I’ve known her for years, we have lots of mutual friends, etc. So in all nearby worlds, I believe Hillary has XYZ. And since my belief in the (suppose, fundamental) principle that having XYZ makes someone a good person is deeply held, I believe it in all nearby worlds too. Yet it is a far-flung world in which, for any relatively simple principle, I believe both the principle and its antecedent but not its consequent. So in all nearby worlds, I also believe that Hillary is a good person. Now take the nearest worlds in which I believe that Hillary has XYZ—since we’re assuming this belief is safe, it follows that in those worlds Hillary actually has XYZ. But since the principle is necessarily true, it follows that in those worlds Hillary is actually a good person. So my belief that Hillary is a good person is safe. (For further doubts about whether moral beliefs are safe, see Joyce [2016].)

The same goes for Adherence. Hillary has XYZ in all nearby worlds, which (given the necessity of the principle) means that she is a good person in all nearby worlds. But I will also believe that she is good in all those worlds, for the same reason as before: I believe the antecedent and the conditional in all nearby worlds. So my belief that Hillary is a good person also adheres. (For further doubts about whether moral beliefs adhere, see Handfield [2016].)

Of course this doesn’t show that all or even most of our particular moral beliefs are safe, or that they adhere. But I think that the example is a pretty mundane one—many of

our particular moral beliefs will be just like this one. It is enough to make us worry that the debunker won't be able to argue that on any given first-order reply, most of our beliefs will fail Safety or Adherence.

It's also unclear whether debunkers should appeal to Sensitivity. If there are no possible worlds where P is true, then it's unclear how we even ought to evaluate what is the case in the nearest possible worlds where P is false. (For further doubts about whether moral beliefs are sensitive, see Joyce [2016].) The debunker might try modifying Sensitivity:

Sensitivity*: In the nearest worlds in which P is false, we do not believe that P.

The modification changes 'possible worlds' to 'worlds'. This allows us to evaluate Sensitivity* even where P is necessarily true, since P could be false in *impossible* worlds.

But Sensitivity* is questionable, at least, as a necessary condition on explaining why we ended up with some reliable faculties—in which case it won't help the debunker. If Sensitivity* is such a necessary condition, then just in virtue of a first-order reply entailing an impossible world where evolution results in false beliefs, it begs the question. But strange things are often afoot in impossible worlds, and besides, what happens in a world so very distant from our own seems irrelevant to whether we have explained why our faculties are reliable in this one.

Of course, one might claim that the nearest impossible worlds where the fundamental principles are false are worlds just like ours in non-moral respects. After all, supervenience only ranges over possible worlds, and fundamental principles at best trivially supervene on the non-moral anyway. So maybe what happens in such worlds is

relevant to explanations of reliability in this one.[12] But whether this is so seems to me at best unclear. We should at least be interested in a different necessary condition on explaining why we ended up with some reliable faculties—one that avoids the potential problems with Sensitivity*.[13]

I suggest that when a reply explains why we ended up with some reliable faculties, then for at least most beliefs produced by such faculties, we believe that P and:

IP: That we believe that P is not probabilistically independent of P.

Belief that P is probabilistically independent of P where:

Pr(We believe that P | P) = Pr(We believe that P).

In other words, our belief that P is probabilistically independent of the truth of P when the truth of P does not change the probability that we believe that P.

IP seems right to me. If I explain why we have a certain reliable faculty, then my explanation entails that we will be more likely to hold the relevant beliefs if they are true. From IP and Truth Selection we can deduce a single sufficient condition for begging the question:

Truth Selection$_{IP}$: A reply to some skeptical worry begs the question if, having assumed the substantive claims in question, our beliefs within the relevant domain are probabilistically independent of their truth.

[12] Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this worry.

[13] None of the problems with the modal conditions will be solved by weakening the necessity involved in moral claims, as Rosen [manuscript] proposes. With Safety and Adherence, this won't affect the nearest worlds. And even though Sensitivity can be evaluated now, the worlds in which our beliefs about fundamental principles are false will be very distant.

I take Truth Selection$_{IP}$ to be fairly intuitive, but I will not give a direct argument for it here. I will show how it explains the intuition that (many) first-order replies are problematic (§3) without overgeneralizing (§4). I therefore hope to show that there is a *prima facie* plausible way of understanding the problem with first-order replies that fills the role that debunkers need it to (with a caveat to be explained shortly).

SECTION 3: FIRST-ORDER REPLIES, SCREENING OFF, AND PROBABILISTIC INDEPENDENCE

Much as the debunker wants a criterion that proves *all* first-order replies objectionable, I think that the best he can do is show that *only some* realists beg the question when they employ such replies. Which realists are the culprits? Those who think that moral facts (or properties, or truths) cannot influence our moral beliefs. Call this the view that moral facts are *impotent*. I think that the paradigm type of influence here would be *causal* influence, and I will argue that realists who think that moral facts are causally efficacious need not violate Truth Selection$_{IP}$. While I want to leave open the possibility that moral facts have some non-causal type of influence, and that a savvy realist could avoid violating Truth Selection$_{IP}$ by endorsing such influence, I leave it to such a realist to supply a satisfactory account of non-causal influence. For all I say here, it may be that the only kind of influence moral entities could exert is causal influence; I want to establish only that this kind of realism, at least, could avoid begging the question against the Standard EDA.

So, let's first assume that moral facts/properties/truths cannot influence our moral beliefs, and see what follows. Consider more closely so-called third-factor replies, such as

Enoch's. Such replies explain our beliefs and their truth in terms of some 'third factor'. In Enoch's case, this factor is that Φing promotes survival.[14] On our substantive moral assumption, this (normatively or metaphysically) explains why Φing is good.[15] But due to evolutionary pressures, that Φing promotes survival also (causally) explains why we believe that Φing is good. So we get the following structure:

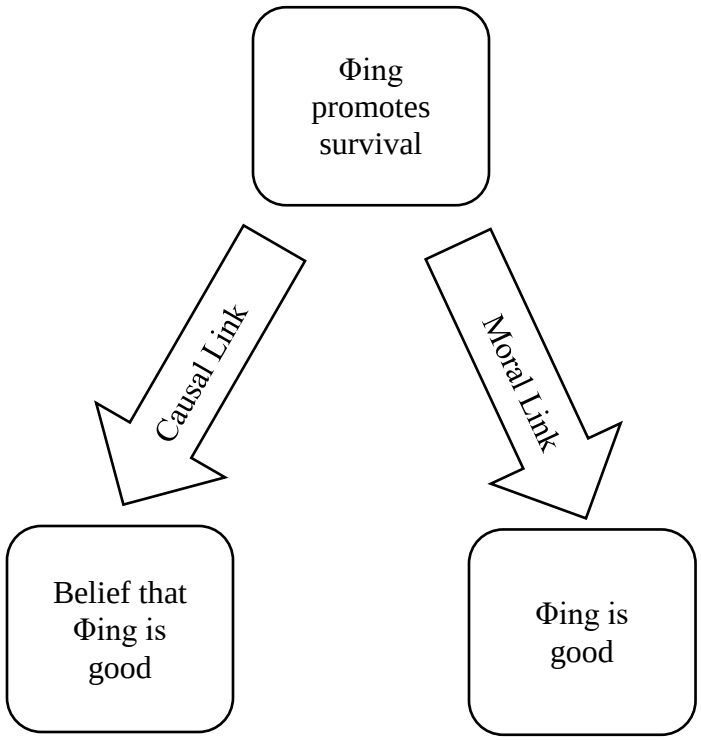

Figure 1: Enoch's Third-Factor View

[14] Enoch never explicitly endorses the specific structure I propose. Yet I take this interpretation as the right one, since he tasks himself with explaining the correlation between our beliefs and their truth, later claiming that some correlations between A and B are explained by a third factor, C, that is 'responsible' for both A and B [2011: 169]. Our beliefs and their truth are thus the correlated factors, each explained by a common *explanans*. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me on this.)

[15] There is a debate about whether, when a normative fact holds in virtue of a non-normative one, the non-normative fact metaphysically or merely normatively explains the normative fact. See Fine [2012].

Enoch's moral assumption gets him the right-hand link, while the debunker's claims about evolution—which he grants for the sake of argument—get him the left-hand link.

Consider next Wielenberg's [2010] third-factor view: we typically believe that we have certain moral rights. It's easy to see why: believing that we have a right to life, for example, will make us more likely to resist being killed, thus more likely to reproduce. But, Wielenberg says, assume that whenever we have certain cognitive capacities, we actually *do* have certain rights. Then we see that our rights coincide with our beliefs that we possess such rights. This gives us the following structure:

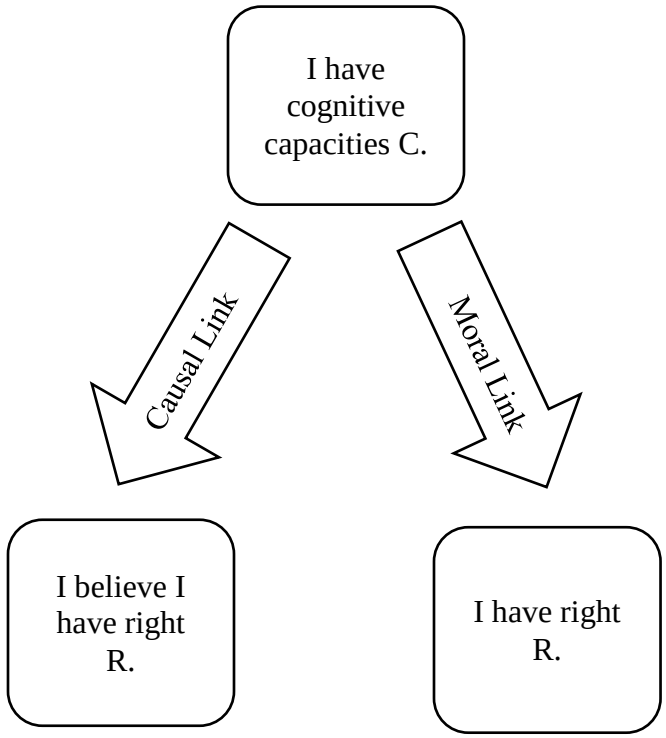

Figure 2: Wielenberg's Third-Factor View

Again, the evolutionary story gets us the lefthand link, while the substantive moral assumption gets us the righthand link.

I want to argue that third-factor views are thus structurally similar to *common cause explanations*—cases in which two effects are correlated because they share a common cause. This similarity—in particular, that both types of explanation involve a third factor 'screening off' one downstream event from the other—helps explain why on third-factor replies, our beliefs are probabilistically independent of their truth.

Consider an example of a common cause explanation. Suppose that, on a particular evening in the U.S., there is a correlation between the number of toilet flushes between 7:00 and 7:30 and the number of pizzas ordered between 7:00 and 7:30. There is no direct causal connection between the two. Instead, they have a common cause: lots of people who are watching the Super Bowl are taking advantage of half-time. Assume also (for simplicity) that its being halftime at the Super Bowl gives us the full causal explanation of the two effects.

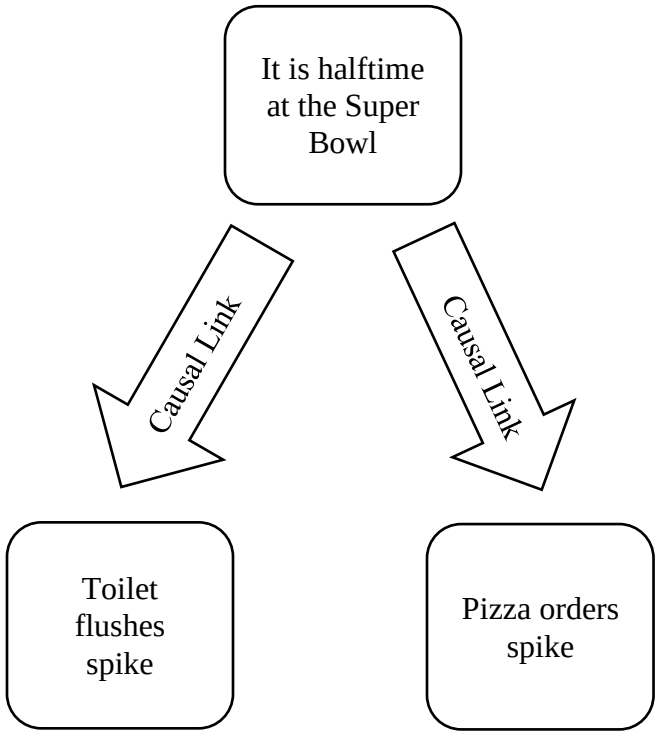

Figure 3: Halftime as the Common Cause

And when this occurs, and there are no independent causal influences on either effect, the cause *screens off* one effect from the other.

Let 'T' represent 'Toilet flushes spike', 'P' represent 'Pizza orders spike', and 'H' represent 'It is halftime at the Super Bowl'. H screens off T from P just in case:

a. $Pr(T \mid P) \neq Pr(T)$

b. $Pr(T \mid P\&H) = Pr(T|H)$

Before taking H into account, the truth of P increases the probability that T will be true. We have stipulated that they are correlated, after all. However, P only increases the probability of T because of H—so, once we assume H, P no longer affects the probability

of T. It follows from (b) that once we assume H, then T and P are probabilistically independent.

Third-factor replies share the same structure as common cause explanations, except that one of the explanations (the right-hand one in my diagrams) is normative or metaphysical, rather than causal. But this does not affect the fact that, once we've assumed our moral principle, we get another case of screening off.

We haven't established yet that there are no other influences on either our believing that Φing is good or Φing actually being good. But this is actually written into the stipulations in place at this point in the dialectic: (i) There are no other influences on Φing's goodness besides Φing's survival promotion. Enoch (and other third-factor proponents) want to only assume one moral truth: in this case, that if Φing promotes survival, then it is good. So there will be no other normative/metaphysical influences on Φing's being good. (ii) There are no other influences on our believing that Φing is good. We are currently granting the debunker the premise that there are no influences on our moral beliefs that will make us any likelier to land on the truth (see Street [2006: 124]). (iii) The two 'effects' won't influence each other. By stipulation, Φing's goodness won't influence our belief that Φing is good. And assuming realism more broadly, our belief that Φing is good won't influence the fact that it is good (such facts are independent of belief). So the parallels with common cause explanations lead us to expect that survival promotion will screen off our having moral beliefs from the truth of those beliefs.

But maybe it's best to look more closely at the probabilities, anyway. We need to establish two things:

a. Pr(We believe that Φing is good) ≠ Pr(We believe that Φing is good | Φing is good)

b. Pr(We believe that Φing is good | Φing is good & Φing promotes survival) = Pr(We believe that Φing is good | Φing promotes survival)

It seems that (a) is true, since we know (given our assumptions) that our belief and its truth are correlated. However, this correlation *only* obtains because of the common explanation of our belief and its truth: survival promotion. So in Enoch's case, once we assume that Φing promotes survival, our believing that Φing is good and our believing it conditional on Φing's goodness are equally probable. Similarly for Wielenberg: once we assume that we have capacities C, our believing that we have right R is just as probable as our believing it conditional on our actually having R.

Here's the payoff: once we assume the moral principle (the right-hand link), and we know that the third factor obtains—which third-factor responses assume—our belief is probabilistically independent of its truth. Taking Enoch as an example, we conclude:

Pr(We believe that Φing is good | Φing is good) = Pr(We believe that Φing is good).

So, on Truth Selection$_{IP}$, third-factor responses beg the question against the Standard EDA.

The simpler first-order replies (like Schafer's above) also entail that our holding our moral beliefs is probabilistically independent of those beliefs' truth. This is at its starkest perhaps in Dworkin's [1996: 125] response to a different skeptical objection: 'But why shouldn't you count it as a piece of luck—a special example of what Bernard Williams has called moral luck—that your self-interest and justice here coincide?' I think such replies are best construed as assuming the truth of our moral beliefs in general—as opposed to third-factor replies, which assume that just one moral belief is true. They thus have no

need of the subtle machinery third-factor replies employ. Take for example our beliefs that particular things are good:

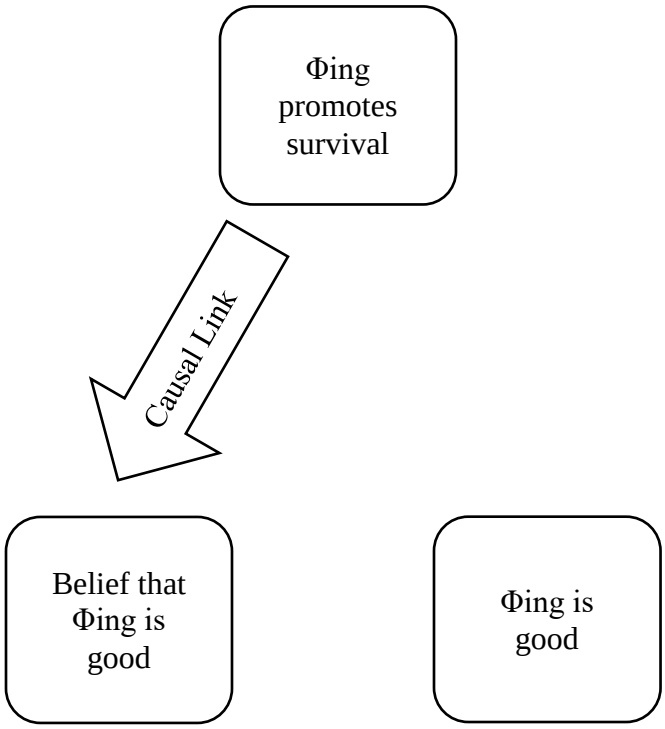

Figure 4: Simple First-Order Replies

Instead of positing a principle, like Enoch, that gets them a common explanation of goodness and our beliefs about it, these simpler first-order replies go straight to the punchline, assuming our moral beliefs in general are true. The proponent of this sort of first-order reply can simply say: 'Φing is good. Oh, and what luck! Evolution has also led us to believe that Φing is good.'

It's not hard to see why, if moral facts are impotent, this sort of reply violates Truth Selection$_{IP}$. By stipulation, there is no way for the truth of our beliefs to influence those

beliefs. And there is no common explanation to our beliefs and their truth. Without either kind of connection, there's simply no way for the truth of our beliefs to make it more probable that we have those beliefs. So these simpler first-order replies also beg the question against the Standard EDA.

So far, I've assumed the general impotence of moral facts, in order to show that if Truth Selection$_{IP}$ is true, then realists who accept such impotence beg the question against the debunker when they make first-order replies. But what about realists who deny the general impotence of moral facts? I want to consider just one kind of view here, arguing that realists who think that moral facts are *causally efficacious* need not beg the question when giving first-order replies. I will call this view *naturalism*. (Whether my definition of 'naturalism' captures all the naturalisms in the literature is another question—here, let it merely be a stipulative definition.[16])

I think that it's pretty clear: naturalists need not beg the question when they make first-order replies to the debunker. This is because, whether the naturalist appeals to some third-factor response or the simpler first-order reply, her naturalism allows her to posit a causal link between the moral facts and our beliefs about them. So, her (simple) first-order reply allows for this structure:

[16] For some popular definitions of 'naturalism', see Parfit [2011: 464] and Enoch [2011: 1]. I think my definition makes sense of these definitions, but see Oddie [2005], Cuneo [2007], and Majors [2007] for discussion of some purportedly non-naturalistic views that endorse the causal efficacy of moral facts. So-called non-reductive naturalists present a further wrinkle—see Brink [1989] and Sturgeon [2006]. Taking Brink's view as an example, it's unclear whether, if moral facts are fully constituted by but not identical to natural facts, we should view them as causally efficacious.

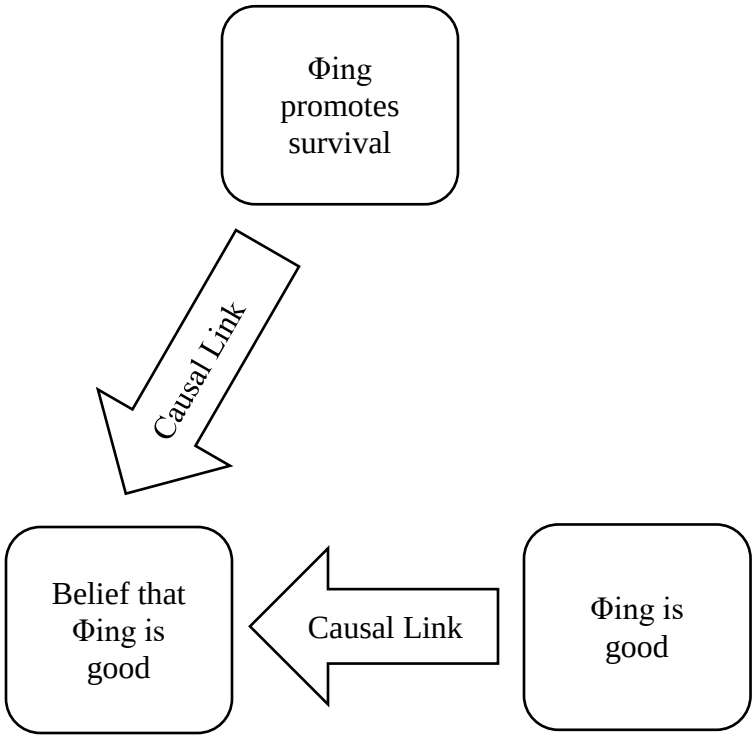

Figure 5: Enoch's Third-Factor View On Naturalism

And of course, when we introduce the assumption that Φing is good the probability that we believe as much will go up, so long as Φing's promoting survival doesn't make it *certain* that we believe that Φing is good.[17] So on Truth Selection$_{IP}$, naturalists do not beg the question when they employ first-order replies.

SECTION 4: TRUTH SELECTION$_{IP}$ DOES NOT OVERGENERALIZE

[17] As a referee points out, this may require slightly backing off the claim that natural selection *fully* explains our moral beliefs.

Now consider replies to perceptual debunking arguments that rely on the truth of some perceptual claims. We need to assume, the story goes, that the observations that confirm evolutionary theory were reliable in order to argue that evolution selects for true perceptual beliefs. But on Truth Selection$_{IP}$, that's fine: the perceptual realist has not yet begged the question. Once we assume the reliability of those observations, though, does it become plausible that our perceptual beliefs were selected for their truth? Or in other words, does the truth of the belief that there is a tiger (or a table, or a tangerine) in front of me make it more probable that I will believe as much, given evolutionary influence on these beliefs? The answer seems to be an obvious 'yes'. If it is true that there is a tiger in front of me, it is adaptive for me to believe it. Believing that there is a tiger in front of me makes it far more likely that I'll run (or fight!). And if there really is a tiger in front of me, then running or fighting greatly increases my odds of

survival. And of course, because evolution selects for such adaptive traits, if there really is a tiger in front of me, I'm more likely to believe it.

Consider next the inductive domain. Again, we may need to assume the reliability of our inductive faculties in replying to inductive skepticism (see Dogramaci [2016]). But once we do so, our inductive beliefs are not probabilistically independent of their truth. Consider one of my distant ancestors: he has watched this trail every day for three months. On every third day, at roughly the same time of the day each time, a rabbit runs along the same portion of the trail. Will my ancestor be more likely to survive if he believes that on the third day, the rabbit will run along the trail? He will *if inductive inferences are reliable*. In that case, the rabbit will predictably run the trail, and if my ancestor believes it, he'll be

more likely to snare him. And of course, snaring the rabbit increases our ancestor's odds of survival, which in turn increases the odds of our making reliable inductive inferences.

There is a problem when we turn to the domains of logic and mathematics. The problem, stated simply, is that truths about mathematics and logic—traditionally understood—are necessarily true.[18] Yet whenever P is a necessary truth, our belief that P will be probabilistically independent of its truth. To see why, consider a short proof. The following are either core Bayesian rules or consequences of those rules (see Titelbaum [manuscript]):

The Ratio Formula:	$Pr(P \mid Q) = Pr(P\&Q) / Pr(Q)$
General Additivity:	$Pr(P\&Q) = Pr(P) + Pr(Q) – Pr(P \vee Q)$
Entailment:	If X entails Y, then $Pr(X) \leq Pr(Y)$
Maximality:	For any proposition P, $Pr(P) \leq 1$

Now suppose that $Pr(Q) = 1$ (i.e. Q is necessary). It follows from Entailment and Maximality that $Pr(P \vee Q) = 1$. But given General Additivity, that means that $Pr(P\&Q) = Pr(P)$. And when we plug that into the Ratio Formula, we get $Pr(P \mid Q) = Pr(P) / Pr(Q)$. Since $Pr(Q) = 1$, by stipulation, $Pr(P \mid Q) = Pr (P)$. This has been called the Problem of Old Evidence (see Strevens [manuscript: ch. 11]).

What follows is that, if the debunker accepts my account, she is committed to each of the following:

i. Either logical realism is false or we have no logical knowledge.

ii. Either mathematical realism is false or we have no mathematical knowledge.

[18] For the objection to work, we have to understand mathematical truths such that they do not include truths like 'There are more than 10 words in this paper'—and similarly for logic.

If evolutionary influence is worrisome for *moral* realists, then it is worrisome for *logical* and *mathematical* realists.

It's important to see that this is not the problem I have been pressing or see as the heart of the issue in the moral domain. I have argued that on first-order replies, our moral beliefs are probabilistically independent of their truth. But this is *not* because such beliefs are necessarily true. In fact, many moral beliefs are only contingently true, as I note above. This stands in stark contrast with the mathematical and logical domains, where all truths are necessarily true. So while in morality, mathematics, and logic, our beliefs will be probabilistically independent of their truth, it's only in the latter two cases that this is because the relevant truths are all necessary. In other words, on first-order replies, our moral beliefs will be probabilistically independent of their truth, but not *trivially* so.

So while, on first-order replies, our moral beliefs are non-trivially probabilistically independent of their truth, our mathematical and logical beliefs are trivially probabilistically independent of their truth. This still leaves open the question of whether this latter fact is problematic for the debunker, and if so what he can say about it. I think that it is not problematic at all, and I'll now argue for this.

When a first-order reply to D-skepticism entails that our D-beliefs are *trivially* probabilistically independent of their truth, that reply is either objectionable or it isn't. Suppose first that it isn't. It's only objectionable, that is, when that reply entails that our D-beliefs are *non*-trivially probabilistically independent of their truth. The debunker would need to narrow Truth Selection$_{IP}$ to reflect this:

Modified Truth Selection$_{IP}$: A reply to some skeptical worry begs the question if, having assumed the substantive claims in question, our beliefs within the relevant domain are *non-trivially* probabilistically independent of their truth.

In this case, the debunker can actually save non-skeptical logical/mathematical realism, while debunking moral realism. And while that's a very interesting—and to many, desirable—result, it is not obviously a problem for the debunker.

Suppose next that a first-order reply *is* objectionable when it entails that our D-beliefs are trivially probabilistically independent of their truth. The debunker will thus be committed to (i) and (ii), above. We really shouldn't be terribly surprised by this result: philosophers have argued that debunkers are committed to the package view already: Clarke-Doane [2012] argues that if moral realism gets debunked, then so does mathematical realism. Schecter [2010: 437] assumes that the 'reliability challenge'—in many respects closely related to debunking arguments—is at least *prima facie* a problem for 'mathematics, modality, morality, and other *a priori* domains'. Bengson [2015] claims there is a prima facie problem for any realm concerning non-spatiotemporal, causally inert entities (see also Faraci [manuscript]). That debunkers are committed to isomorphic arguments against logical and mathematical realism is thus exactly what many expected to happen.

The debunker should not be worried by this, for two reasons. First, the Problem of Old Evidence is a problem for Bayesianism in general. The debunker, therefore, should not be especially worried about it. To be sure, she should be worried insofar as she is a Bayesian—which my account here commits her to—but Bayesians abound these days, and

we should not throw out my account just because a very broadly plausible approach that it depends on has a problem. And besides, when/if Bayesians solve the Problem of Old Evidence, the solution might offer debunkers some interesting way to introduce probabilistic dependence relations to mathematical and logical truths.

Second, however, even if there is no solution to the Problem of Old Evidence, the generalization to mathematics and logic is not the type of generalization that the critics of the Standard EDA are (or should be) worried about. Those who are worried that the question-begging charge will overgeneralize are almost exclusively worried about the *perceptual* domain: they worry that the Standard EDA is going to entail that if truths like 'there is a tree in front of me' are mind-independent, then we can't have knowledge regarding them [Schafer 2010; Enoch 2011: 158ff; Shafer-Landau 2012; Berker 2014; Vavova 2014]. If the debunker must claim either that such truths are really mind-dependent, or that we can't know anything about them, that's a huge cost for her argument. Similarly for inductive truths: if the debunker is committed either to the mind-dependence of truths about whether the sun will rise tomorrow, or that we can never know such things, that seems like a death-knell for the Standard EDA (see Dogramaci [2016]). But the Problem of Old Evidence doesn't have any bearing on the perceptual and inductive domains: truths in those domains are typically contingent. So in summary, what turns on this question—of whether it's problematic for a reply to entail trivial probabilistic independence—is just whether the debunker is committed to one or the other interesting, but not obviously problematic view.

Suppose everything I've said is true: that those who deny that moral facts can influence our beliefs cannot permissibly utilize first-order replies to the Standard EDA, but that (at least) naturalists can. It does not immediately follow that the former class of realists cannot give a plausible reply to the Standard EDA: it might be that, as FitzPatrick [2015] has argued, there are independent problems with debunking arguments. It is beyond the ken of this paper to decide whether this is true. We ought to conclude that *if* there are no independent problems with the Standard EDA, then it is successful against many realists, but not naturalists.

CONCLUSION

First-order replies seem from one angle intuitive, from another philosophical prestidigitation. I've argued that there is one understanding of the problem with such replies that fills debunkers' dialectical needs: it entails that an important class of realists—those who endorse the impotency of moral facts—cannot make use of first-order replies, and it does so without objectionably overgeneralizing. If moral facts cannot influence our beliefs, then the truth of our moral beliefs does nothing to increase the probability that we'll have those beliefs. Realists who accept this thus beg the question when employing first-order replies. This account may or may not debunk mathematical and logical realism, but I've argued that whether this is so doesn't affect the plausibility of the Standard EDA.

Chapter 3: Can Theists Avoid Epistemological Objections to Moral (and Normative) Realism?

INTRODUCTION

Many epistemological objections to moral realism allege that realism entails moral skepticism. While it's unclear whether such objections work against non-theistic moral realists, many philosophers seem to think that theistic realists have an obvious escape route: if God exists, there is clearly no epistemological obstacle to moral realism. Yet because this is taken as so obvious, such suggestions are crucially underdeveloped. In this paper, I have two main purposes. First, I want to show that things are not so simple. There is a good case to be made that any plausible theistic reply to these objections begs the question, by relying on a substantive moral claim when our knowledge of such is precisely what is in question. My second purpose is to show how the theist can plausibly answer this challenge: she can argue that God brought about our moral knowledge without relying on any substantive moral claims of the kind targeted by such objections. And what's more, this answer also works in reply to epistemological objections to normative realism, more broadly: it doesn't rely on the kind of normative belief targeted by such objections. I conclude that while the theist does have a distinctive reply to epistemological objections, it is both far from obvious and very different from what many assume it would look like.

In §1, I lay out several different epistemological objections to moral realism, before outlining one in more detail—an evolutionary debunking argument—so that I might rely on it as a test case. In §2, I review several philosophers' claims that theistic moral realism enjoys immunity from such epistemological objections. I then outline what I think is a natural case to be made for these claims. Then, in §3, I show why this "natural reply" won't work: it violates the requirement (which I defend) that replies to the evolutionary debunking argument not rely on a substantive moral claim. In §4 I issue a challenge for the theistic moral realist: she must argue that God has most non-moral reason to bring about our moral knowledge. In §5, I show two ways in which the theist might meet this challenge. Finally, in §6 I argue that the second of these two responses also works in reply to epistemological objections to normative realism, more broadly.

SECTION 1: EPISTEMOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS TO MORAL REALISM

Moral realism is the thesis that (i) sincere moral judgments express beliefs, (ii) some of those beliefs are true, and (iii) the truth of some moral beliefs does not constitutively depend on the attitude of any actual or hypothetical agent.[19] Many epistemological objections to moral realism have it that realism entails moral skepticism. Yet different objections have it that this entailment holds because of different constraints on knowledge—constraints that, if realism were true, we purportedly could not meet. In this section, I'll briefly summarize a number of these general epistemological objections to

[19] See, e.g., Shafer-Landau (2012): 1; Enoch (2011): 3-4.

moral realism, before going on to develop one at greater length. This last argument will be a test case for many of the claims I make about theistic moral realism in this paper; at the end of the paper, I'll try to generalize my conclusions about this one argument to all of the epistemological objections.

Some think that to know something, we must believe it by means of a *non-accidentally reliable* method, and that moral realism fails this constraint:[20]

No Accident

4. To know that P, S must believe that P by means of a non-accidentally reliable method.
5. If moral realism is true, then no agent believes any substantive moral claim by means of a non-accidentally reliable method.
6. Therefore, if moral realism is true, then no agent has any substantive moral knowledge.

By "substantive moral knowledge," I mean knowledge of a substantive moral claim.[21] What makes a moral claim substantive is hard to say: "Discrimination on the basis of race is bad" is substantive; "Either Bob's discrimination was bad or it's not the case that it was bad" is not. We don't need a precise definition: debunkers are targeting knowledge of claims like the first example, but not the second.

Many others worry that if realism is true, it would be an *unexplained coincidence* if our moral faculties were reliable:[22]

No Coincidence

7. To know that P, it must not be an unexplained coincidence that the faculties that produce S's belief that P are reliable.
8. If moral realism is true, then it would be an unexplained coincidence if any agent's moral faculties (at least those that produce substantive moral beliefs) were reliable.
9. Therefore, if moral realism is true, then no agent has any substantive moral knowledge.

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[20] See Setiya (2012): ch 3. For non-accidentality as a general constraint on knowledge, see Unger (1968).

[21] The "substantive" qualifier isn't always included, but should be. No matter the nature of moral facts, we could have knowledge of *analytic* moral claims.

[22] Street (2006) and (2008). See also Bedke (2009), Shafer-Landau (2012), and Parfit (2011): 492-497. Finally, for presentation of a similar argument, see Enoch (2011): ch. 7 (esp. 7.2).

Two other objections to moral realism can be grouped together. According to the first, if realism is true, then in the nearest possible worlds in which our moral beliefs are false, we still have those beliefs—i.e., they are *insensitive*:[23]

Sensitivity

10. If for some belief that P, S believes that P in the nearest possible worlds in which not-P, then S does not know that P.
11. If moral realism is true, then all agents would have the substantive moral beliefs they actually do in the nearest possible worlds in which those beliefs are false.
12. Therefore, if moral realism is true, then no agent has any substantive moral knowledge.

According to another objection, moral realism entails that in most of the near-by possible worlds in which we have the moral beliefs we do, our moral beliefs are false—i.e., they are *unsafe*:[24]

Safety

13. If for some belief that P, P is false in most of the near-by possible worlds in which S believes that P, then S does not know that P.
14. If moral realism is true, then all agents' substantive moral beliefs are false in most of the near-by possible worlds in which they have those beliefs.
15. Therefore, if moral realism is true, then no agent has any substantive moral knowledge.

There will be further details and problems for each of these four arguments, but such will be irrelevant here.

One might wonder what it is particularly about *realism* that generates these worries. That is, why does realism make it the case that (for example) no agent believes any substantive moral claim by means of a non-accidentally reliable method, and so on for the other constraints on knowledge? There is no helpful answer available at this point in the

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[23] Bedke (2009), Clarke-Doane (2012), and Kahane (2011). See also Joyce (2001): 163-165; Street (2006): 125-126, and especially endnote 26. For a very similar way of formulating sensitivity (and safety), see, e.g., Pritchard (forthcoming).

[24] See Ruse and Wilson (1985), Joyce (2007): 181, Street (2006): 120-121, and even Darwin himself (1871/1998): 102. See also Bogardus (2016).

dialectic, since the second premise of each argument could be supported in a number of different ways. However, it will be helpful to see one important way these premises have recently been supported. To this I now turn.

Though they are inherently more general in scope, most of these objections have recently been made in a very particular form. That is, each has it that if realism is true, then our moral beliefs fail some particular necessary condition on knowledge. But many philosophers have argued that it is the influence of *evolution* on our moral beliefs that results in the failure of that necessary condition.[25] For most of the rest of my paper, I deal exclusively with such evolutionary debunking arguments (EDAs). I do this primarily just in order to have a single test case. But EDAs are an especially good test case for claims about the more general objections, since for any of those objections, there is an EDA that is a particular version of it. §5 will focus on taking the conclusions I draw from the test case and generalizing them to apply also to the above objections. For these reasons, let us turn now to consider what I call the Standard EDA:

The Standard EDA

16. Epistemological Premise: If (a) moral realism is true, (b) evolution has strongly influenced our moral faculties in such a way that those faculties are disposed to produce beliefs with certain propositional contents over others, and (c) there is no independent confirmation of the reliability of those faculties, then we have no substantive moral knowledge.
17. Empirical Premise: Evolution has strongly influenced our moral faculties in such a way that those faculties are disposed to produce beliefs with certain propositional contents over others.
18. Autonomy: There is no independent confirmation of the reliability of our moral faculties.
19. Therefore, if moral realism is true, then we have no substantive moral knowledge.[26]

[25] See Street (2006); Gibbard (2003): ch. 13; and Joyce (2007). See also Horn (forthcoming), Greene (2008), Kitcher (2007), and Ruse and Wilson (1986).

[26] This argument is meant to capture what is common to the EDAs cited in footnote 9 in the most charitable way possible.

Let's briefly look at the premises in more detail.

Premise (14) is not my concern here, since theism generally does nothing to aid a denial of evolutionary influence on our moral faculties.[27] Perhaps theists have a special purchase on denials of evolution altogether—but I will make my task easier by only considering types of theism which are compatible with evolutionary biology. Premise (15) will end up being the theist's target. But before moving on to see whether she can hit that target, let's get a quick look at how the standard debunker could support (13).

It is (13) where the four general epistemological objections above come into play. As one example, consider:

> *Sensitivity*$_{EDA}$
> 20. If (a-c) hold, then we would still have our moral beliefs in the nearest possible worlds in which they are false.
> 21. If we would believe that P in the nearest possible worlds in which P is false, then we do not know that P.
> 22. Therefore, if (a-c) hold, then we have no substantive moral knowledge.

(18) simply represents the general constraint on knowledge mentioned originally in premise (7) of Sensitivity. The other constraints could (and have) played similar roles in defense of (13).

But what about (17)? What is it about *realism* that generates the worry that our moral beliefs are insensitive (when assuming evolutionary pressure and no independent confirmation)? Roughly, the worry is that my belief that I ought to take care of my children is adaptive regardless of whether it is true: believing it makes us more likely to pass on out

[27] Critics of (14) include Shafer-Landau (2012): 5-8; Fitzpatrick (2014): 241-246.; Parfit (2011): 534-538; Huemer (2008); James (2011): 79-81; Copp (2008): 194; Street (2006): 155. Such replies, while theism-compatible, are not uniquely theistic.

genetic material even if it is false. (Compare to the perceptual case: it is usually only adaptive to believe that there is a tiger nearby *if there actually is.*) Thus, in the nearest worlds in which this claim is false, we still believe it.

Anti-realists don't face the same fate. Take the (toy) anti-realist view that an act is wrong iff—and wholly because—I believe that it is wrong. On this view, supposing that it is true that I ought to take care of my children, this is only true because I believe that it is true. Where it is false, I do not believe that it is true—as a direct result of the theory. So, in the nearest worlds in which it is false, I do not believe it.

There is a version of the Standard EDA that relies on each of the constraints on knowledge above, but I need not spell them out here. My point here is simply to show how the Standard EDA can be a vehicle for a variety of different epistemological objections, and to set the stage for an explanation of how theists might reply to the Standard EDA. In extremely general terms, on the Standard EDA, realists supposedly run afoul of each constraint because they think that the moral facts "float free" of our moral beliefs, whereas anti-realists think that there is a close dependence of the facts on our beliefs, allowing them to say that such beliefs are non-coincidentally true, or formed on the basis of a non-accidentally reliable method, etc.

SECTION 2: THE NATURAL THEISTIC REPLY TO THE STANDARD EDA

Many philosophers seem to think that, while the Standard EDA is at the very least *prima facie* problematic for the realist, it is clearly not problematic for the *theistic* moral

realist.[28] In most cases, this seems to be so clear to such philosophers that they relegate the point to a short paragraph, if not a footnote. Thus, Kahane:

> If we were the designed products of God, then it does seem rational for us to rely on our natural doxastic dispositions given that these were implanted in us by an omniscient and omnibenevolent being.[29]

Bedke similarly claims:

> Given this [our moral beliefs' causal history], it would be a great cosmic coincidence if the causal order were orchestrated just perfectly, so as to produce intuitions and beliefs that accurately reflect the ethical facts. We would need something like a god rigging the ethical facts and the causal order so as to ensure their serendipitous coincidence.[30]

The idea, I think, being that if we had evidence of such a god, the evolutionary objection from "cosmic coincidence"—in Bedke's terms—would disappear.

There are also those who claim that theism can easily solve a general epistemological objection. Parfit considers an argument from massive coincidence that is independent of evolutionary considerations and claims that:

> God might have designed our brains so that, without such causal contact [with mathematical facts], we can reason in ways that lead us to reach true answers to mathematical questions. We might have similar God-given abilities to respond to reasons, and to form true beliefs about these reasons.[31]

And likewise, in discussing the argument from non-accidental reliability mentioned above, Setiya claims that:

> Things look different if we turn to God. Assuming God can know the truth in ethics, even if it is irreducible, he may create in us, or some of us, reliable dispositions. On this account, ethical principles *can* explain how we are disposed to form true beliefs [thus meeting the

[28] Besides those below, see Wielenberg (2010): 460; Bogardus (2016): 7, 12-13; Crow (2015): 10-11; and Fitpatrick (2014): 250.
[29] Kahane (2011): 109. See also fn. 16, which acknowledges further complexities.
[30] Bedke (2009): 109.
[31] Parfit (2011): 493.

> non-accidental reliability constraint]. This is, I think, the only hope for ethical knowledge if the facts are constitutively independent of us.[32]

So according to Setiya, not only can theism solve a major epistemological problem for realism, but it alone can.

However, things are not so easy for the theist as such philosophers have made them look. In fact, what's lacking from all of these philosophers' work is any real description of how the theistic response to the Standard EDA is supposed to work. In the rest of this section, I hope to give a plausible model for how a theistic reply to the Standard EDA would proceed. Only then can I point out the obstacles to such a reply.

First we should get clear on the goal of theistic replies to the Standard EDA. Some of the quoted theistic replies above may be read as arguing that it *possible* that realism is true and we have moral knowledge. It is tempting to read them, that is, as arguing:

> a. The evolutionary debunking argument fails *in general*, because it is possible that theism is true, and on theism, it's possible that moral realism is true and we have substantive moral knowledge.

(a) takes the task of debunking arguments to be to show the *impossibility* of moral knowledge. But this doesn't make sense of why such authors go on to present their own non-theistic proposals—why would they, if they had already defeated the Standard EDA?

My construal of debunking arguments makes sense of such reasoning: the Standard EDA is an argument that we *don't* have moral knowledge on realism, not that we *can't*. (Nor does it proceed to the former by way of the latter: surely the Empirical Premise is, if true, only *contingently* true.) So the theist needs to do more than show the compossibility

[32] Setiya (2012): 114.

of (i) God exists, (ii) moral realism is true, and (iii) we have substantive moral knowledge. Yet she need not show that (iii) *deductively follows from* (i) and (ii), since she is only trying to rebut an argument that (ii) and (iii) don't co-obtain. So the theist's task is to show, instead:

> b. The Standard EDA fails *for theists*, because on the assumption of theism, it's plausible—not merely possible—that if moral realism is true, then we have substantive moral knowledge.

This means that, with a very important exception to be noted shortly, the theist is free to rely on any claim that is plausible on the assumption of theism, to show that assuming (i) and (ii) makes (iii) plausible.

So, here's one example of how the theist could reply to the Standard EDA. Call it "the Natural Reply." God, if he exists, is omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect. Because he is omnipotent and omniscient, he has the ability to either (a) start the causal order in such a way that evolution results in human beings who have moral knowledge or (b) monitor the evolutionary process and intervene in the causal order to "tweak" that process if he foresees that it will lead to humans who don't have moral knowledge.[33] The latter would be a form of "special divine action", which is assumed by some to be more problematic than other forms of God's action such as creating and sustaining the world.[34] I will employ no such assumption here (see Plantinga (2011: chs. 3 & 4) for an argument that it is false), but at any rate, if special divine action is especially problematic, (a) is still open for the theist.

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[33] See Sober (2010) and Sober (2014) for an argument that it is compatible with evolutionary theory that God guided certain mutations.

[34] See Plantiga (2011): ch. 3.

To see how this would work in more detail, assume that the standard debunker supports (13)—the Epistemological Premise—via $\text{Sensitivity}_{\text{EDA}}$. In either (a) or (b), we would end up with sensitive moral beliefs: in the nearest possible worlds in which our actual moral beliefs are false, God brings it about that we don't have them. (Of course, he could do (b) while also doing something akin to (a)—i.e., starting the causal order in such a way that, with the fewest possible "tweaks" on his part, it will result in humans with true moral beliefs.) And—very importantly—because God is morally perfect, he *will* do either (a) or (b). This is because a morally perfect being wants his creatures to be good, and goodness (at least for humans) requires moral knowledge.[35]

SECTION 3: WHY THE NATURAL REPLY WON'T WORK

In this section I will argue that the Natural Reply fails. That argument relies on a controversial constraint on replies to the Standard EDA. I give an argument for that constraint but, in the end, I assume its truth for the sake of argument: if it is false, replies are incredibly cheap, and all realists—theists and non-theists—are in the clear.

The Natural Reply relies on the following claims: (i) a morally perfect being would want his creatures to be morally good, and (ii) moral goodness (at least for humans) requires moral knowledge (and hence, e.g., sensitive moral beliefs). Each of these is plausibly a substantive moral claim; surely at least one is. But recall that the Standard EDA

[35] The Natural Reply might be thought problematic independently of its use as a reply to the Standard EDA. But such objections are not my concern here.

attempts to give decisive reason to think that it is precisely substantive moral claims that we can't know to be true. Surely we are unjustified in relying on a premise P in an explanation if we have decisive reason to think that we don't know that P. (Imagine telling your friend that he shouldn't eat meat because it results in harm to animals, but that you don't know that it results in harm to animals!) So, by relying on (i) and (ii) in her reply to the Standard EDA, the theist assumes that she *does not* have decisive reason to think that she doesn't know that those claims are true. But this is just to assume that the Standard EDA fails, in the course of an argument that attempts to show that the Standard EDA fails.

The problem is going to be hard to get away from, for the theist. He could easily fill in the details of his story differently: perhaps God wants us to have moral knowledge because a morally perfect being would want to maximize utility, and the best way for humans to maximize utility is by their having moral knowledge. (Again, there may be independent problems here.) But it's easy to see that this variation also relies on a substantive moral claim, and will for that reason also beg the question against epistemological objections. Because the problem is so general, we can formulate it as a condition on any theistic reply to the epistemological objections in question:

> *No Moral Claims*: A reply to an epistemological objection to moral realism cannot rely on a substantive moral premise.

(I will soon argue that No Moral Claims ought to be narrower, but this is the constraint as it is suggested in the literature.)

Let's say that a reply to an epistemological objection *relies on* a premise just when the content of that premise is part of the explanation of why we have moral knowledge.

Importantly, a reply doesn't rely on a premise (in this restricted sense) when it merely *enables* the explanation of our moral knowledge.[36] That I desired a Dr. Pepper might be part of the explanation of why I walked to the 7-Eleven. Yet, though I wouldn't have walked to the 7-Eleven had I desired much more strongly to stay home, that I didn't desire more strongly to stay home is not part of the explanation of my walking to 7-Eleven. It merely enables the explanation. In my sense then, the explanation of my walking to the 7-Eleven relies on the claim that I desired a Dr. Pepper, but not on the claim that I didn't desire more strongly to stay at home.

A brief word on the necessity of the distinction: lots of things are relevant, in some broad sense, to an explanation. It is in this broad sense that both my desire for Dr. Pepper and my lack of over-riding desire are relevant to my walking to the 7-Eleven. And it is in the same sense that it's relevant that I'm not asleep, and that I'm generally physically able to pursue the objects of my desires. But we don't want all of these things entering into the *explanans*—otherwise the *explanans* will be infinitely large! After all, there are infinitely many desires that I don't have, but that (if I did have them) would over-ride my present desire for a Dr. Pepper. So we need some way of distinguishing those things that are relevant to the explanation, but which aren't themselves part of the *explanans*. And what seems to unite such things is that, either by their presence or absence, they allow the explanation to occur.

[36] See Dancy (2004): ch. 3.

There is a hardy debate about whether No Moral Claims is true. Many argue that it is.[37] Many others argue that it is not, since in order to reply to skepticism in other domains—e.g., the perceptual—we must rely on substantive claims within that domain.[38] I cannot settle the dispute here. I think No Moral Claims is plausible enough. But more importantly, the question I'm concerned with here–whether theism is immune to epistemological objections to realism–is really only interesting on the assumption of No Moral Claims. If we can rely on substantive moral claims in replying to the Standard EDA, then replies are fairly cheap.[39] David Enoch—and other proponents of "third-factor replies"—have shown how, on the assumption of just one substantive moral premise, it is no longer surprising that we ended up with true moral beliefs.

Enoch assumes that anything that promotes survival is at least somewhat good. If that's right, then when X promotes survival, X is good. But when X promotes survival, because of the evolutionary story, we should also not be surprised that we ended up believing that X is good (it will make us more likely to pursue X). This gives us an explanation of the striking correlation of our moral beliefs with the moral facts.[40] This sort of reply could at the very least succeed against versions of the Standard EDA that identify the fundamental epistemological problem as one of accidental reliability or coincidental truth, since if we have an explanation of the correlation of our beliefs and their truth, their

[37] See Shafer-Landau (2012): 32-35, Horn (forthcoming), Behrends (2013): 7-8, Vavova (2014): 81, and Morton (2016).
[38] See Schafer (2010): 475-476; Shafer-Landau (2012): 21-23; Enoch (2011): 175; Setiya (2012): 79; White (2011): sec. 4.2; Vavova (2014): sec. 3.1; Berker (2014): sec. 8; Dogramaci (2016). See also Clarke-Doane (2012) and Bedke (2009): sec. 3.2, although these are more general overgeneralization worries.
[39] Enoch (2011): ch. 7; Schafer (2010): 477; Wielenberg (2010); Brosnan (2011); Skarsaune (2011); Parfit (2011): 532-533; Setiya (2012): ch. 2; Dworkin (1996): 125.
[40] See Enoch (2011): 7.4.

truth is not a coincidence, nor is our reliability accidental. And it may be harnessed as a reply to safety- and sensitivity-based worries (though I cannot pursue this question here). So I will assume No Moral Claims because our question here is only of interest if it is true.

SECTION 4: A CHALLENGE FOR ANY THEISTIC REPLY

But No Moral Claims isn't just a problem for the Natural reply. In this section I'll issue a challenge to *any* theistic reply to the Standard EDA: the theist seems bound to appeal to a substantive moral claim in the course of what I'll argue is her best line of response to the Standard EDA. I think that the theist can answer the challenge. It's just that answering the challenge turns the theistic reply into something far different than the Natural Reply.

The theist's job, in giving a distinctly theistic reply to the Standard EDA, is to show that, on the assumption of theism, the following claim is true:

> Divine Action: God has intentionally acted so as to bring about (or make likely) our moral knowledge.[41]

Of course there are logically possible alternatives here, which still make appeal to God. Perhaps, for example, God *unintentionally* brought about our moral knowledge. But these alternatives seem so implausible that the theist, in appealing to them, would no longer have a minimally plausible response to the Standard EDA. So, since theism doesn't on its own

[41] Bogardus (2016) seems to think that the theist can reply to the Standard EDA while denying Divine Action. He argues that theists can appeal to divine testimony or a God-given moral faculty (see especially p. 7, 12-13). This may be so. However, take what I say here as an attempt at a theistic reply that is done via natural theology alone, and without denying that the evolutionary explanation of our moral faculties is as good as debunkers claim it is.

entail Divine Action, the theist must convince us that we get Divine Action on the assumption that God exists.

Here's what I consider a very natural way of doing this. An omniscient, perfectly rational being—which the God of theism is—will plausibly always do what he has most overall *normative reason* (henceforth "reason") to do. (Aquinas endorses a similar thesis—but about the good rather than normative reasons—when he claims that the "voluntary appetite tends to a good which is apprehended."[42]) This requires only a minimal type of motivational internalism, according to which a perfect being's motives are in proportion to his/her reasons, and that in such beings there is no weakness of will. So, the theist should argue that God at some point had most overall reason to bring about our moral knowledge. This would ideally involve two separate arguments: an argument that God had reason to bring about our moral knowledge, and an argument that this reason was not outweighed by any other reasons God had at the time. (That God has reasons—even moral reasons—to act doesn't, of course, commit us to the controversial claim that God has moral obligations, since God could have a (moral) reason to Φ without having an obligation to Φ.[43])

Unfortunately, the second task is a huge one. But I take it as *prima facie* plausible that the God of theism wouldn't have strong reason to do anything incompatible with our moral knowledge—at least, such reason wouldn't be strong enough to outweigh his reason to bring about our moral knowledge. (If I am wrong about this, then we were all silly to assume that the theist could ever have a response to the Standard EDA: God would not

[42] See Aquinas (1485/1948): first part of the second part, question 8. See also Leftow (2005).
[43] See Alston (1990) for an argument that God has no moral obligations.

have ever brought about our moral knowledge!) Importantly, accounts that require this stipulation won't, just in virtue of this, violate No Moral Claims. That there are no counter-balancing reasons for God not to bring about our moral knowledge merely enables, but does not explain, why God would bring about our moral knowledge. Rather, God's *reasons* explain why he would so act. Thus, a response that requires that God not have counter-balancing reason not to bring about our moral knowledge doesn't *rely on* this claim, in the technical sense I use here, and so such a response won't violate No Moral Claims. So, I will assume here that if the theist has shown that God at some point had reason to bring about our moral knowledge, he has thereby shown that Divine Action is true.

The challenge to the theist is this. It seems initially as if God's reason to bring about our moral knowledge must be a *moral* reason. And if so, that is bad news, since that God has moral reason to bring about our moral knowledge is a substantive moral claim. But what other kind of reason could God have to bring about our moral knowledge—an epistemic reason? Surely our moral knowledge is not a means to God's having true beliefs. A prudential reason? But it seems strange to say that God can ever be benefited, since this seems to imply that he was not perfectly well-off before. And even if this weren't a problem, it's not clear how our moral knowledge would benefit God. It is therefore unclear how the theist could meet the challenge laid out here. (I'll explain shortly, however, why we ought to reformulate the challenge.)

So in short, the theist needs to either show why God had a non-moral reason to bring about our moral knowledge, or find some way of arguing for Divine Action other than what I suggest above. If neither can be done, then the theistic gambit is bankrupt: the

theist cannot reply to the Standard EDA without relying on a substantive moral claim, which I've argued is illicit.

It's important to see that this is just as much a challenge for theistic replies to any of the epistemological objections that I have mentioned. Recall that they all share the same conclusion: if moral realism is true, then no agent has any substantive moral knowledge. So, if theistic responses to the Standard EDA require the theist to show Divine Action, then likewise for the other objections. In each case, the theist needs to show the same thing: that God intentionally brought about our moral knowledge. In order to reply to *any* of the objections I've mentioned, the theist must argue for Divine Action without appealing to substantive moral claims.

SECTION 5: HOPE FOR THE THEISTIC MORAL REALIST

Thus far, I have played the pessimist. I have issued a challenge that, if unanswered, entails that theists are not in any privileged position with regard to answering epistemological objections to moral realism. But in this final section of the paper, I want to explore whether the theist can answer this challenge. I will outline and evaluate two ways in which the theist could reply to the Standard EDA—and thus the other epistemological objections mentioned here—without violating No Moral Claims (or rather, the condition as it ought to be formulated, which I am about to lay out). I conclude that the theist actually *can* successfully reply to epistemological objections to moral realism, in a way that non-theists cannot.

It's very important to see that No Moral Claims is too broad a restriction, as stated. Recall the dialectic: debunkers argue that what causes problems for our moral knowledge is the claim that moral truths are constitutively independent of anyone's attitudes. What motivates No Moral Claims is the idea that, when a realist relies on a moral claim in her response to the Standard EDA, she's relying on exactly the kind of claim knowledge of which the debunker is targeting. So, it seems that No Moral Claims ought to be restricted:

> No Moral Claims*: A reply to an epistemological objection to moral realism cannot rely on a substantive moral premise that, if true, is true independent of anyone's attitudes.

Since it is only attitude-independent moral claims that the Standard EDA targets, surely it should only be such claims that are off-limits in replying to the Standard EDA.

So, the moral realist needs to establish that God has a reason to bring about our moral knowledge without relying on any claim that is both a substantive moral claim and attitude-independent if true. In the remainder of this section, I first want to show two ways that the theist could do this. In the next section, I'll show why the same general strategy works even for normative realists replying to epistemological worries for normative realism.

The key insight in the theistic realist's response is that moral realists need not think that *all* reasons are attitude-independent. Indeed, that some reasons are fully explained by attitudes seems to be relatively uncontroversial: in Mark Schroeder's example, Ronnie has a reason to go to the dance, while Bradley doesn't. Why? Because Ronnie likes dancing, and Bradley can't stand it. Realists of any stripe, Schroeder claims, should agree that *some*

reasons are explained by our attitudes in this way.[44] Schroeder's Humean Theory of Reasons is the further, controversial claim that *all* reasons are so explained.

I think Schroeder is right about this. It is possible that Ronnie only has a reason to go to the dance because he likes dancing *and because you have a reason to do what you like doing*—and so on for all reasons that are partially explained by attitudes, such that no reason is fully explained by attitudes—but this seems somewhat forced. Indeed, it is most natural to read the debate about realism as analogous to the debate about reasons internalism/externalism: the former claims that reasons always entail (or are explained by) some motivational states, whereas the latter deny this, claiming that *sometimes* we can have reasons without the relevant motivational states.[45] Realism should be read as merely denying the anti-realistic claim that *all* moral facts are mind-dependent. This is, at the very least, the kind of realism debunkers are concerned with.[46] At any rate, this is the kind of realism I am concerned with here. So we need not worry about whether any given normative claim that the theist relies on is a substantive moral claim, so long as that claim is one such that, if true, its truth is fully explained by some agent's (or agents') attitudes.

God, of course, has attitudes, and there doesn't seem to be any barrier to those attitudes explaining his reasons, just as our attitudes often explain our reasons. The task for the theistic moral realist is to find an attitude that God plausibly has that could fully explain his reason to bring about our moral knowledge. The theist must, however, do this in a way

[44] Schroeder (2007): 1-2.
[45] Finlay and Schroeder (2017).
[46] Street (2006): 110.

that doesn't invite further questions about why God has that attitude. Otherwise, it might be that while God's reason is grounded in an attitude, he only holds that attitude because some mind-independent, substantive moral claim is true—then the theist's story would still violate No Moral Claims*.

Suppose, then, that God wants us to have moral knowledge because it will be good for us. He wants what is good for us simply because he loves us—and that seems like as good a place as any to end an explanation. Thus God's reason to bring about our moral knowledge is satisfactorily explained—in a way that does not demand further explanation—by his love for us. This reason is thus explained by someone's attitudes—i.e. God's—and so the theist does not violate No Moral Claims* in relying on the claim that it obtains.

But why think that moral knowledge will be good for us? Because it makes us resemble God more, no matter what the moral truths are, and it is good for us to resemble God. First, since God knows the moral truths (because he knows everything), our knowing them makes us more like him. Second, moral knowledge will help us to do what we have moral reason to do, regardless of what that is, since we are much more likely to do what we have moral reason to do if we know what that is. To the extent that we do what we have moral reason to do, we more closely resemble God, since God does what he has moral reason to do.

As Robert Adams has pointed out, the notion of resemblance presents some peculiar problems.[47] It's not clear what resemblance *is* for one thing, since merely sharing a property is not enough: a squirrel could have the same number of hairs as me and not resemble me any more than an otherwise identical squirrel. Furthermore, merely resembling God is not sufficient for goodness: parodies resemble their objects but do not share in their virtues. (Though Adams is concerned with goodness rather than the good-for relation, we might have a related worry about the latter: I may parody God, and thus resemble him, and be worse-off for it.)

I can only dip into such deep waters here, but it is worth noting that while our theistic realist will eventually want to flesh out her theory of resemblance, the issue doesn't present the problems it does for Adams, and so is not nearly so pressing. Adams is so worried about the above worries in large part because he needs to make sure to give a *realistic* account of resemblance—one on which the fact that two things resemble each other obtains mind-independently. He has to worry about this because on his view, all goodness is grounded in resembling God, such that an anti-realistic understanding of resemblance would result in thorough-going anti-realism about the good, which he wants to avoid.[48] But our theistic moral realist is not committed to the claim that goodness is always grounded in resembling God—just that this is sometimes the case. And so, even if resemblance—or the conditions under which resemblance to God is good for someone—is mind-dependent, this would only commit us to the claim that well-being is sometimes

[47] Adams (1999): 31-33.
[48] Adams (1999): 18.

mind-dependent. And that is consistent with realism as I've defined it—even realism about well-being in particular.

Now, it might be objected that my explanation above appeals to substantive moral claims. After all, I said that (i) God knows the moral truth, that (ii) God does what he has moral reason to do, that (iii) knowing the moral truth will help us do what we have moral reason to do, and that (because of all this) (iv) we resemble God insofar as we have moral knowledge. Are none of (i-iv) substantive, mind-independent moral claims? After all, they each use the word "moral", variously making claims about moral knowledge, moral truth, and moral reasons.

We saw above that (iv) might be mind-dependent, and the theistic realist can consistently endorse this. But that won't help with (i-iii). So I will argue that the theist avoids violating No Moral Claims* here because none of (i-iv) is a substantive moral claim. As I noted above, defining "substantive moral claim" is very hard, and I argued that we only need a non-definitional characterization of such claims: they're the set of claims knowledge of which debunkers are targeting. While I don't intend to give a definition of "substantive moral claim", I think the following is a good test, at least for claims that do not represent principles: a claim is a substantive moral claim only if its truth value changes depending on what we have moral reason to do.[49] But (i-iv) will be true *regardless* of what anyone has moral reason to do.

[49] As I note in the main text, moral principles are an exception: they are often substantive, while being compatible with the obtaining of any moral reasons. "If punching John shortens his life, then we have moral reason to refrain from punching him" is technically compatible with both having moral reason to refrain from punching John and not having such reason (after all, the conditional is compatible with the

Consider (i): God, because he knows everything, knows the moral truth regardless of what moral reasons obtain or fail to obtain. If rational beings have moral reason to maximize utility, then he knows this. If rational beings have no such reason, he knows this. Now consider (ii): whether God has moral reason to deceive or refrain from deception, to kill or refrain from killing, he will still do what he has moral reason to do. Similarly for (iii): whether we have moral reason to lie or not (etc.), knowing the moral truth will help us do what we have moral reason to do. And finally, consider (iv): because of the foregoing, we resemble God insofar as we have moral knowledge, regardless of what anyone has moral reason to do.[50]

Before I move on to consider a second strategy for the theistic realist, let's consider a second objection: this first strategy relies on claims about well-being, or the good-for relation. Is well-being a *moral* phenomenon? If so, then insofar as such truths are attitude-independent, the theist cannot rely on substantive claims about well-being, such as that it is good for us to resemble God.

The theist might try replying that the good-for relation is non-moral. I think this is right, but for reasons that will soon become clear, this won't help the cause. The theist ought instead to argue that the claims about well-being required to make his case are not true independent of anyone's attitudes. Having desires satisfied, experiencing pleasure,

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falsity of the antecedent). But we can brush aside such examples here, since we're not aiming for a sure-fire test for some claim's being a substantive moral one. The test seems like a good one for claims like (i-iv).

[50] One might think there is cause for worry here if Robert Adams is right that for any non-supreme good, X is good because X resembles God, the supreme Good (see Adams (1999): chapter 1). But even if this is true, claims about resemblance to God need not be substantive moral claims. That goodness is fully grounded in property P does not entail that claims about P are moral claims. The hedonistic utilitarian need not say that claims about pain and pleasure are moral claims, after all.

being happy: all of these states can fully explain an increase in well-being, without conflicting with moral realism, as explained above. Not only that, such explanations are compatible even with objectivist theories of well-being, since objectivist theories allow that *sometimes* having a desire satisfied (etc.) is a benefit.

And it's easy to make that case that moral knowledge will promote such states without relying on any substantive moral claims: we will be happy/have more desires filled/experience more pleasure insofar as we resemble God, regardless of what anyone has moral reason to do. These claims are generally plausible on the assumption of most theistic views: does God want us to resemble him even though it *won't* make us happier, or fulfill any of our desires? No—promotion of such states seems like one of the main reasons he would desire that we resemble him.

A second general route for the theistic moral realist also appeals to the claim that we resemble God insofar as we have moral knowledge, and helps itself to claims (i-iv) above in order to establish that. But instead of arguing that it is good for us that we resemble God, the theist could here argue that God desires his own glorification, and he doesn't desire this for any further reason—he just desires it.[51] Furthermore, the theist could argue, it glorifies God to have his creation resemble him. Therefore, God's desire for his own glorification grounds a reason to bring about our moral knowledge.

It seems perfectly in line with the theistic picture to say that God desires his own glorification. Furthermore, this is consistent with God being perfectly well-off, since it

[51] This is a weakness of the second strategy that the first does not have: God may only desire his own glorification because it is good (or because he has reason to, etc.). In that case, the theist may have to appeal to a mind-independent moral claim, thus violating No Moral Claims*.

seems possible for a perfectly well-off being to have desires. (At any rate, the theist is in much deeper trouble if God has no desires: it is a common assumption among theists that there are things God wants us to do.) And of course, if God's reason to bring about our moral knowledge is explained by his desire for glorification, the theist won't here run afoul of No Moral Claims*.

SECTION 6: EPISTEMOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS TO NORMATIVE REALISM

What I have called the Standard EDA targets moral realism. Yet many epistemological objections, such as Street's, have it that if *normative* realism is true, then we have no *normative* knowledge.[52] (Normative realism is the thesis that (i) sincere normative judgments express beliefs, (ii) some of those beliefs are true, and (iii) the truth of some normative beliefs does not constitutively depend on the attitude of any actual or hypothetical agent.) This begets the worry that an analogue of No Moral Claims holds:

> *No Normative Claims*: A reply to an epistemological objection to normative realism cannot rely on a substantive normative premise.

And this is worrisome for the theist in particular because both of the theistic responses I proposed to the Standard EDA rely on substantive normative premises.

However, just as with the Standard EDA, I think that No Normative Claims is over-broad. Normative realism allows that *some* reasons are explained by our attitudes: Ronnie

[52] Street (2006).

likes dancing and Bradley doesn't, and that is enough to explain why Ronnie has a reason to go to the party but Bradley doesn't. So just as in the moral case, we ought to reformulate our constraint:

> No Normative Claims*: A reply to an epistemological objection to normative realism cannot rely on a substantive normative premise that, if true, is true independent of anyone's attitudes.

Because he doesn't violate this suitably qualified constraint, the theist can now simply import his two responses to the Standard EDA, suitably modified. We resemble God insofar as we have *any* kind of knowledge, after all, or insofar as we are disposed to act in accordance with *any* kind of reason. So, whether God's reason springs from his desire for our well-being or his desire for glorification, he will have a reason to bring about all normative knowledge in us.

CONCLUSION

Many philosophers take it as a truism that theists need not worry at all over various epistemological objections to moral realism: if God exists, certainly he could just engineer things in such a way that we end up with moral knowledge. But the most natural ways of arguing for this are stripped from us when we recognize that we cannot rely on any substantive moral claims. However, there is hope for the theist: God plausibly has mind-dependent reasons to bring about our moral knowledge. If so, then the theist can reply to epistemological objections to moral realism without begging the question. Not

only that, but she can reply to epistemological objections to normative realism without begging the question. The upshot here is nothing so grand as that moral/normative realists ought to be theists. However, it might be as significant as that theists are better off with respect to epistemological objections to moral/normative realism than are non-theists. To the extent that such objections succeed, non-theistic realism fails while theistic realism lives to fight another day.

Chapter 4: Grounding the Normative: A Problem for Structured Non-Naturalism

INTRODUCTION

It is wrong for John to kick my cat because it will cause the cat serious pain, but also because it is wrong for people to cause serious pain in certain circumstances. This suggests the following structure: some normative facts hold in virtue of both non-normative facts and normative principles. As I will construe this, it is a claim about the metaphysical grounds of normative facts. Many non-naturalists about the normative want to endorse this view generally—that particular normative facts are often partially grounded in normative principles. In this paper, I argue that non-naturalism is inconsistent with this thesis about partial grounding in principles, due to the nature of normative principles and their grounds. I then consider two ways in which the non-naturalist position could be modified or expanded to solve this problem. No solution, it turns out, is without its problems.

SECTION 1: PRELIMINARIES

The notion of *ground*, according to its promoters, has been integral to the enterprise of philosophy,[53] and in particular, ethics[54] for a long time. While it is a primitive idiom, it is fairly intuitive: that one fact obtains in virtue of another, that one is explained by another, that one is grounded in another—these all express the same notion.[55] Furthermore, the notion of ground helps us make sense of many philosophical claims. Some claim that a thing has its dispositions in virtue of its categorical features—the glass is fragile in virtue of the molecules that make it up, as well as the laws of chemistry and physics. Legal positivists claim that the grounds of laws are wholly social, consisting in things like the acts of officials and social practices.[56] Both claims make sense if they are about grounding relations.

This brief defense of the notion of ground may be unsatisfying to some. I would first direct them to fuller defenses of grounding, especially those in footnote 1. But second, I make the following plea: surely there is *some* broad metaphysical dependence relation that plays an integral role in philosophy, or at least in ethics. How else can we make sense of the Euthyphro dilemma, which challenges us to specify the direction of *dependence* between our moral beliefs and the moral facts? Or the ordinary sense in which pain can *make* someone's life bad? Or the idea that, for those with non-naturalist leanings, it is simply not enough for normative properties to be distinct from non-normative properties, but that normative properties cannot be *exhaustively constituted* by non-normative

[53] See, most prominently, Rosen (2010), Schaffer (2009), Fine (2012a), and Correia and Schneider (2012).
[54] See Berker (MS), as well as Dancy (1981).
[55] I here treat grounding as a relation between facts—as opposed to, say, a sentential operator—though this is not essential to any of my arguments.
[56] Both examples are from Rosen (2010): 110.

properties? We need some broad notion of metaphysical dependence to interpret these claims. Call it "constitution," or call it "grounding"—my point will hold regardless, though I rely on the notion of ground here.

While the grounding relation in particular is not essential to my point—any broad metaphysical dependence relation will do—I rely on that relation here. Let "$\Phi < \Psi$" represent "Φ fully grounds Ψ," where full ground is the primitive notion above. Let "$\Phi \prec \Psi$" represent "Φ partially grounds Ψ," where that means that Φ, together with some other (possibly empty) set of facts, fully grounds Ψ. Thus, $A,B < A\&B$, whereas $A \prec A\&B$.

The grounding relation has a fairly complex pure logic.[57] I need only outline a small part of it. Here are a few valid rules of inference:[58]

Cut: $$\frac{\Delta 1 < \Psi 1 \qquad \Delta 2 < \Psi 2 \qquad \ldots \qquad \Psi 1, \Psi 2 \ldots < \Lambda}{\Delta 1, \Delta 2 \ldots < \Lambda}$$

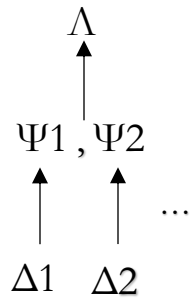
Transitivity: $$\frac{\Delta 1 \prec \Delta 2 \qquad \Delta 2 \prec \Delta 3}{\Delta 1 \prec \Delta 3}$$

Irreflexivity: $$\frac{\Delta 1 \prec \Delta 1}{\bot}$$

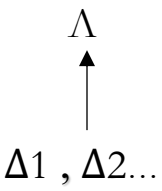
Cut is a chaining principle, according to which if:

[57] See Fine (2012a) and (2012b), as well as deRosset (2015).

[58] Of course, as with everything, these have been questioned. Those critical of irreflexivity include Wilson (2014) and Correia (2014). Schaffer (2012) is critical of transitivity. Raven (2013) and Litland (2013) defend these principles.



Then:



Transitivity simply allows us to chain two partial grounding relations to get another. Irreflexivity states that no fact partially (or, therefore, fully) grounds itself.

Finally, a "grounding tree" is what you see above in my diagram elucidating Cut—although those trees are incomplete. A complete grounding tree for a given fact specifies the full grounds for that fact, and the grounds for those grounds, and so on until it "bottoms out" in ungrounded facts.[59] A fact can have multiple trees, because it can have multiple full grounds (e.g., the fact that "P or Q" can be fully grounded in the fact that P, or the fact that Q). When I use diagrams in this paper to represent grounding trees, I'll represent full grounding relations with solid arrows and partial grounding relations with dashed arrows. Unless I put an ellipsis to the right of a set of dashed arrows, let the reader assume that the partial grounding relations in question together constitute a full grounding relation.

[59] See Rosen (2010): 111-112.

This much of an outline of the grounding relation will suffice for my purposes here. What I've said here conforms to grounding orthodoxy, and furthermore, everything I've said here can be plausibly applied to whatever broad metaphysical dependence relation the grounding skeptic chooses to frame metaethical claims in terms of.

SECTION 2: STRUCTURED NON-NATURALISM

Non-naturalism is the claim that there are *sui generis* normative entities of some kind.[60] Where substantive normative facts are just those normative facts that are not principles, I think that non-naturalists are committed to the following claim:

No Full: Some substantive normative facts or principles are not fully metaphysically grounded in non-normative facts.

Ralf Bader argues that on non-naturalism, No Full must be true.[61] Barry Maguire formulates the autonomy thesis about the ethical in such a way that, insofar as non-naturalists are committed to autonomy—and they seem to be—they also must accept a thesis that entails No Full.[62] Some non-naturalists even seem sympathetic to the idea that No Full is actually a *definition* of non-naturalism.[63] (I do not think that No Full is a definition of non-naturalism—only a commitment of the view. As we'll see later, there are other conditions failing which would disqualify a position from being non-naturalist.)

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[60] Shafer-Landau (2003): 55; Smith (2013): 28; McPherson (2012). However, non-naturalism is often defined as the claim that there are irreducibly normative properties/facts--see Parfit (2011): 464; Enoch (2011): 1. See also Ridge (2014) and Cuneo (2007).

[61] Bader (forthcoming).

[62] Maguire (2015): 194.

[63] See Cuneo and Shafer-Landau (2014): 401-403, though the authors speak in terms of truth-making, not grounding.

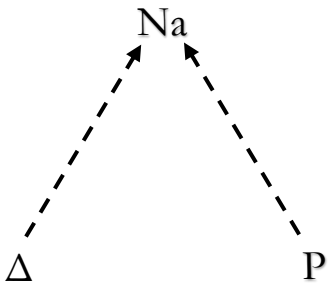
My argument is fairly simple: unless non-naturalists accept No Full, they cannot distinguish themselves from non-reductive naturalists like David Brink.[64] Such naturalists deny that normative (in Brink's case: moral) facts are identical to non-normative ones, yet argue for some sort of full metaphysical dependence of the normative on the non-normative. In Brink's case, this dependence relation is *constitution*. But surely there is nothing special here about constitution, as opposed to other robust metaphysical dependence relations. The non-reductive naturalist gets to keep her naturalism not because she endorses the constitution relation *in particular*, but because she endorses *some* type of exhaustive metaphysical dependence of the normative on the non-normative. So the non-naturalist, to distinguish herself from the non-reductive naturalist, must deny the full metaphysical dependence of the normative on the non-normative. Since grounding is a type of this dependence, the non-naturalist must accept No Full.

Once the non-naturalist accepts No Full—as I have argued he must—then it is very natural to accept a further claim, namely:

> Structure: All substantive normative facts are partially metaphysically grounded in normative principles.

I'll work with atomic substantive normative facts, for simplicity. Where "Na" is the fact that a has normative property N, "Δ" is a set of non-normative facts, and "P" is a normative principle, those who believe Structure think that the trees of particular normative facts look like this:

[64] Brink (1989): 6.5 and 7.1. See also FitzPatrick's (2008) criticism of Shafer-Landau's (2003: 74-79) view.



For context, compare this to Ralf Bader's view, on which the role of principles is to stand outside the grounding relation and "govern" it, just as causal laws govern the cause-effect relation, without themselves beings amongst the causes, or inference laws warrant conclusions without themselves being premises.[65] Importantly, causal laws are not the same *kind* of thing as causes (events), and inference rules are not the same kind of thing as premises (propositions). So also, normative principles are not the same kind of thing as grounds. That is, they are not *facts*, but entities that govern the grounding relation between facts.

> Many non-naturalists believe Structure. Among them is T.M. Scanlon:
>
> > It might be tempting to say that mixed normative claims…are "true in virtue of" non-normative claims…But this would be misleading insofar as it suggested that they are true only in virtue of the truth of these claims, neglecting the role of pure normative claims in determining how this is the case.[66]

Barry Maguire is even more explicit: "particular ethical facts obtain in virtue of more general ethical facts together with pertinent non-ethical facts."[67] There are other authors who gesture at Structure, as well.[68]

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[65] Bader (forthcoming).
[66] Scanlon (2014): 40.
[67] Maguire (2015): 194.
[68] See Enoch (2011): 144-145; FitzPatrick (2008): 186-192.

And it's easy to see why. First, it seems that normative principles play *some* role in explaining other normative facts. Suppose I'm asked why it was wrong for Wu to destroy the rug. I might answer: "Well, because it caused Jeffrey a lot of trouble, and it's wrong to cause other people lots of trouble." Abstracting from the question of whether the principle I cite is true, there seems to be nothing odd about my explanation: people give similar explanations all the time. But if principles aren't amongst the grounds of the normative facts being explained, what other explanatory role could they play?

Second, many (such as Maguire) go further than No Full, arguing that normative facts are *never* fully grounded in the non-normative. If that's right, then Structure seems all but inevitable: particular normative facts will never be fully grounded in the non-normative. However, they're also bad candidates for being ungrounded: that John's act was good is explained by something. So on this view, particular normative facts need to be partially grounded in another normative fact—and what better candidate than a principle that links the particular normative fact to its non-normative grounds? Call the conjunction of non-naturalism and Structure "structured non-naturalism." I will spend most of the rest of the paper arguing that structured non-naturalism is incoherent.

SECTION 3: THE INCOHERENCE OF STRUCTURED NON-NATURALISM

Structured non-naturalists claim that substantive normative facts are partially grounded in principles. What will principles look like? I can see three possible answers to this question, and there's trouble in each case. Here's an outline of the argument:

The Master Argument

1. If Structure is true, then principles are either generalizations, grounding-facts, or some sort of ungrounded fact.
2. If principles are generalizations, then grounding is not irreflexive.
3. If principles are grounding-facts, then non-naturalism is false.
4. Principles are not some sort of ungrounded fact.
5. So, if Structure is true, then either grounding is not irreflexive or non-naturalism is false.
6. Grounding is irreflexive.
7. So, if Structure is true, then non-naturalism is false.

I leave (6) as a very plausible assumption (see above). So, I will now argue for (1-4).

3.1 Defense of (1)

Principles are either generalizations, grounding-facts, or some sort of ungrounded fact. Let me emphasize up-front that this is a *simplification*. There are at least a few other ways of understanding normative principles—they could, for example, be hedged generalizations. But I think that any other way of understanding principles will have the same problems as one of the three options here considered.

It is very natural to think of principles as universal generalizations. This is how Russ Shafer-Landau thinks of them, for example.[69] Why is it wrong for you to wantonly destroy Jeffrey's rug? Because it was Jeffrey's property (non-normative fact), and all acts in which someone else's property is wantonly destroyed are wrong (principle). This makes it sound like we end up with a generalization:

$\forall x(Dx \rightarrow Nx)$[70]

[69] Shafer-Landau (1997) and (2003): 268, fn. 2.

[70] For a novel way of reading generalizations that differs from this, see Fine (2015) and Fine (2016). I don't consider this approach simply for reasons of space.

Furthermore, we might think of this generalization as being preceded by either a "it is a law that" operator, or by a necessity operator of some kind. (Whether moral principles are *normatively* or *metaphysically* necessary is controversial,[71] and won't matter for my argument here.)

But it is equally natural to read the principle here as claiming: "All acts that are not utility-maximizing are wrong *in virtue of that very fact*." After all, utilitarians don't seem to be arguing just for the necessary coincidence of (e.g.) wrongness and failure to maximize utility. That's compatible with God arbitrarily orchestrating such a coincidence, and this seems out of sync with utilitarianism—the utility facts *explain* the wrongness facts! So it might be that normative principles are facts about grounding relations.[72] For example, it's ultimately wrong to destroy Jeffrey's rug because:

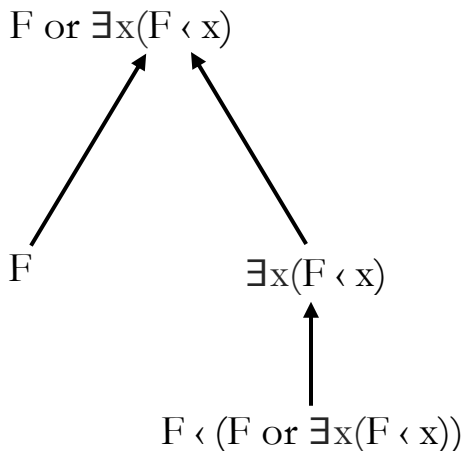
$\forall x(Dx \prec Nx)$

The grounding here must be partial, since by stipulation—recall Structure—the principle, and thus *this very grounding fact*, partially grounds the wrongness of your act, and therefore the fact that it doesn't maximize utility cannot be a (non-redundant) full ground.

It may seem that understanding principles in this way is doomed from the start. After all, the structure we end up with here is that $(A \prec B) \prec B$, and one might think that a fact cannot be even partially grounded in the fact that this very fact is partially grounded in another. But I believe that we are independently committed to this type of grounding

[71] See Fine (2012a): 38 and Rosen (MS).
[72] See Berker (MS), §4.

structure. Consider the following fact: F or ∃x(F ‹ x). (Let F be some fact that obtains necessarily, like that 0 = 0.) This fact is grounded in the following way:



Notice, however, that on the righthand side, by transitivity, we get that (F ‹ (F or ∃x(F ‹ x))) ‹ (F or ∃x(F ‹ x)). And this exhibits the disputed pattern: (A ‹ B) ‹ B.

Here's why the fact that F or ∃x(F ‹ x) is grounded in the way I propose. Because we know that F obtains (it does so necessarily, by stipulation), we know that the left branch obtains, assuming that whenever A obtains, A < (A or B).[73] But because F fully grounds (F or ∃x(F ‹ x)), we know that F fully grounds *something* (and therefore partially grounds something). So, we know that ∃x(F ‹ x), and again, because it's the righthand disjunct, this fact fully grounds that (F or ∃x(F ‹ x)). Finally, in the bottom right, we know that F ‹ (F or ∃x(F ‹ x)), since this is entailed by the lefthand branch. Furthermore, this fact fully grounds that ∃x(F ‹ x): that F grounds a *particular* fact—namely, that (F or ∃x(F ‹ x))—itself

[73] Fine (2010) has shown that this is not generally true, but Litland (2015) shows how it can be properly restricted, and the restricted version would still work for my purposes here.

grounds *something*.[74] But now I've shown that each component of the picture above obtains, and by transitivity, this gives us (F ‹ (F or ∃x(F ‹ x))) ‹ (F or ∃x(F ‹ x)). So I think that we ought to take seriously the suggestion that principles are grounding facts: it is possible that (A ‹ B) ‹ B.

But perhaps all this is wrong-headed. Perhaps normative principles are of a kind that need not be grounded at all. Such has been suggested by some of the same authors who have endorsed Structure. Maguire says that his view commits him to the claim that "there will be ethical facts of some kind (presumably ethical principles) that ground other facts but that are not themselves grounded".[75] Scanlon and Enoch also suggest such a view.[76] Tim Maudlin develops a parallel view, on which laws of nature are fundamental.[77] What normative principles would have to *be* in order to be ungrounded will not concern me here, since my objection to this view will not turn on that issue.

Now, there's not much more that I can say in defense of (1), except for the following informal reflection. Whatever principles are, they've got to be the kind of thing that "takes in" non-normative facts and "spits out" normative facts. This is so because, on structured non-naturalism, the function of the principles is to bridge the gap between the non-normative and the normative—after all, as non-naturalists, structured non-naturalists believe that the normative cannot be fully grounded in the non-normative. So, it's natural to think of them as universally quantifying over a conditional, with the non-normative as

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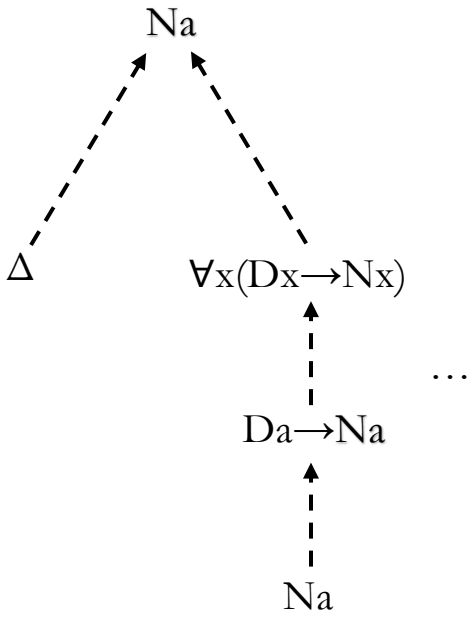
[74] I rely on the principle that when Φa obtains, Φa < ∃xΦx, which Kramer (2013) presents a problem for. But the problem cases involve self-grounding, which my case doesn't.
[75] Maguire (2015): 195.
[76] Enoch (2011): 148; Scanlon (2014): 2, 40-41.
[77] Maudlin (2007): 17-18.

the antecedent and the normative as the consequent, or as grounding-facts like the above. Such structures bridge the gap between the non-normative and the normative, and it's hard to see what else could, without falling prey to one of the problems I mention below.

3.2 Defense of (2)

If normative principles are generalizations, then partial grounding is not irreflexive. That is, if principles are generalizations, then some facts partially ground themselves. The reason why is fairly simple. A universal generalization is at least partially grounded in its instances, such that each instance partially grounds the generalization.[78] So the fact that ∀x(Dx→Nx) will be partially grounded in the fact that Da→Na (where "Da" is a member of Δ). But the fact that Da→Na will be partially grounded in the fact that Na (though conditionals are often grounded in false antecedent and consequents, it cannot be so here: it is the fact that Na that is being grounded, so it must obtain). So by Transitivity, the fact that Na will partially ground the fact that Na. Here's the tree for the fact that Na:

[78] For all I've said, Rosen (channeling Russell) might be right that generalizations can't be *fully* grounded in their instances (Rosen 2010: 118).

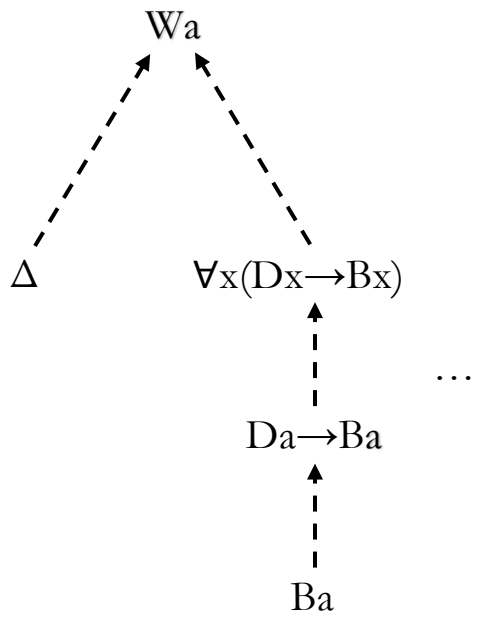


Thus, if principles are generalizations, then partial grounding is not irreflexive: facts can partially ground themselves.

Putting a necessity operator—of whatever strength—in front of the generalization won't help, either. This new fact may require further grounds in addition to its instances—as Rosen suggests, maybe laws of essence[79]—but its instances are still part of the explanation. (If not, and the essence is the full ground, then the structured non-naturalist will have the problem I've already mentioned: that such essentialist facts seem distinctively naturalistic.) Likewise with the "it is a law that" operator: depending on one's view of laws, the law will either be at least partially grounded in its instances or be fundamental (in which case, see section 3.4).

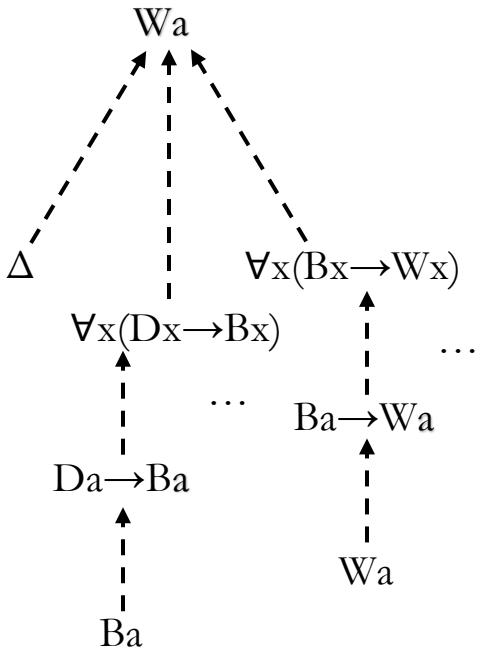
[79] Rosen (2010): 119.

Now, it might seem as if a quick fix is at hand. The problem came about because a certain property instantiation is grounded in a principle whose consequent ascribes that very same property. But why not think that a fact about wrongness could be grounded in a principle of, say, badness? So we would end up with something like this:



Not only is this consistent with the irreflexivity of ground, but it can seem to make sense of the intuition that wrongness obtains in virtue of facts about badness.

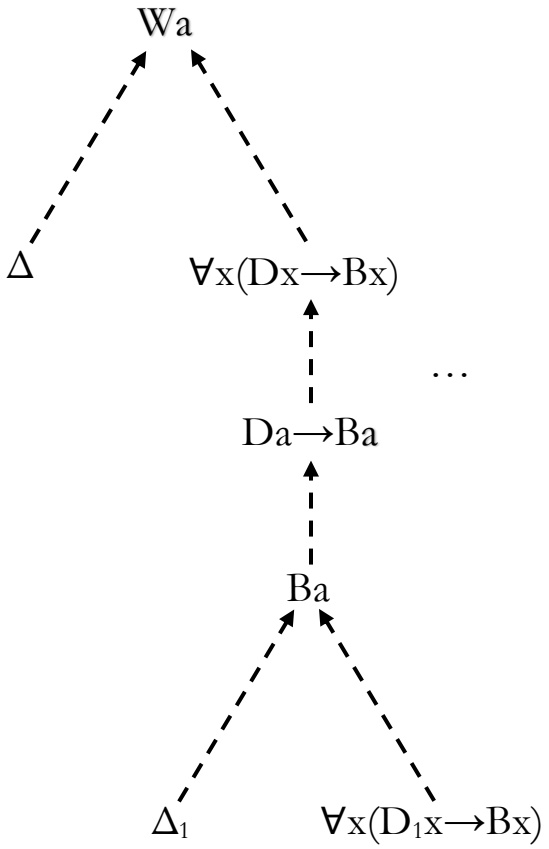
But the problem remains. First, the structured non-naturalist will see an explanatory gap in this picture. Have I fully explained the fact that my act is *wrong* if I tell you that is has some non-normative features, and that if it has those features, it's *bad*? No—I've yet to tell you why the act is *wrong*. We seem to need another principle connecting badness and wrongness, such that:



And then, on the righthand branch, we get the same result: grounding is not irreflexive.

Perhaps we don't need this extra principle on the righthand side. Even still, the problem persists. The fact that my act is bad, after all, does not seem like it could be fundamental (i.e., ungrounded): something must explain why it is bad. (Though this follows from the plausible principle that particular instantiations of normative properties are not fundamental, my argument hereafter only requires that there be *one* particular instantiation of badness that is not fundamental.) And just like before, some non-normative

features seem relevant to my act's badness: it was bad because it caused pain, for example. But that can't be the only ground for my act's badness, for the non-naturalist—then that my act was wrong would be fully grounded in non-normative facts. So, there will need to be another normative principle in play here:



Notice that the non-normative facts grounding that my act is bad are different from those that ground that my act is wrong, lest we end up with another failure of irreflexivity. This is already objectionable, since in most (all?) cases where badness contributes to wrongness,

the non-normative facts that are relevant to that act's badness are also relevant to its wrongness.

But of course the most straightforward problem is that grounding will again fail to be irreflexive. For now our new principle ("$\forall x(D_1x \rightarrow Bx)$") will be partially grounded in its instances, and my act's badness will be partially grounded in my act's badness. Now of course, someone could object in the same way as in the first case—that my act's badness could be grounded in a principle concerning some other normative property than badness. But the problem will reiterate, and (because particular instantiations of normative properties are generally not brute) will continue to do so until a property-instantiation is grounded in a principle that involves that same property. So unless infinite grounding chains with infinitely many simple normative properties are possible—they're not—grounding is not irreflexive, on this view of principles.

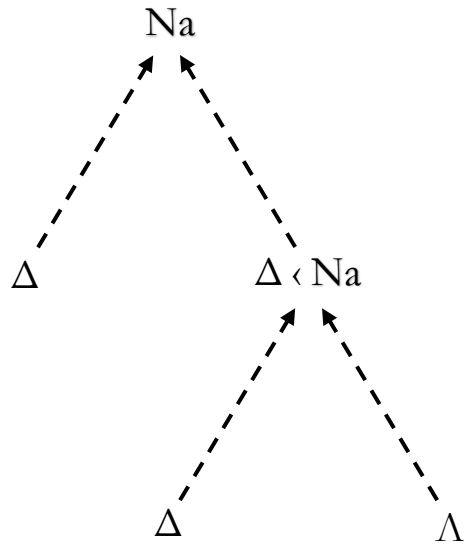
3.3 Defense of (3)

If normative principles are grounding-facts, then non-naturalism is false. For the most part—with a proviso to be mentioned shortly—this is because if principles are grounding-facts, then No Full is false. The argument in support of this is fairly complex, so here's a rough outline: grounding-facts must be grounded. There are three basic ways they could be grounded, but on two of these ways, all substantive normative facts and principles will be fully grounded in non-normative facts. A third entails that non-naturalism is false in a unique way. So, if principles are grounding-facts, then non-naturalism is false.

There is very good reason to think that grounding facts cannot be fundamental. First, grounding facts relate the fundamental to the non-fundamental, so they necessarily have non-fundamental components. Thus, Fundamentality entails that grounding facts cannot be fundamental. Second, as Karen Bennett points out, the fundamental entities—whatever they are—are open to free modal recombination. If grounding relations are among those entities, then there is a possible world just like this one, but in which *no* grounding relations obtain. In such a world, the actually grounded entities either don't exist or are fundamental. Neither option is plausible.[80]

The question of *how* grounding-facts are grounded has been answered in a number of ways. According to both Karen Bennett and Louis deRosset, when A < B, this fact is fully grounded in A.[81] However, we need to know what grounds the fact that A ‹ B. Presumably it will still be A—but assume, for the sake of argument, that A only *partially* grounds the fact that A ‹ B. In our case, that means that Δ ‹ (Δ ‹ Na). Still, whatever else is necessary to *fully* ground the fact that Δ ‹ Na will also be non-normative: Na certainly can't enter into the grounds, on pain of violating Irreflexivity. More generally, if normative facts enter into the grounds, then on this picture, we'll just end up with an infinite chain of normative ground. So, we get the following tree for the fact that Na, on the Bennett/deRosset picture:

[80] See Bennett (2011). The basis for this argument is in Schaffer (2010): 40.
[81] See Bennett (2011) and deRosset (2013).



Λ here is a set—possibly empty, if the fact that A fully grounds that A ‹ B—of non-normative facts, which together with Δ, fully grounds the fact that Δ ‹ Na.

On this picture, substantive normative facts and principles will all be fully grounded in non-normative facts, violating No Full. Δ is non-normative by stipulation. Call "Γ" whatever the full grounds of Δ are. It is clear that Γ will be wholly non-normative here: for example, the fact that an act fails to maximize utility (Δ) will just be grounded in facts about particular pleasures and pains. But we established above that the facts in Λ are all non-normative as well. But given this, we can prove the following via Cut:

1. Γ < Δ
2. Δ,Λ < (Δ ‹ Na)
3. Δ,(Δ ‹ Na) < Na
4. Therefore, Γ,Δ,Λ < Na.

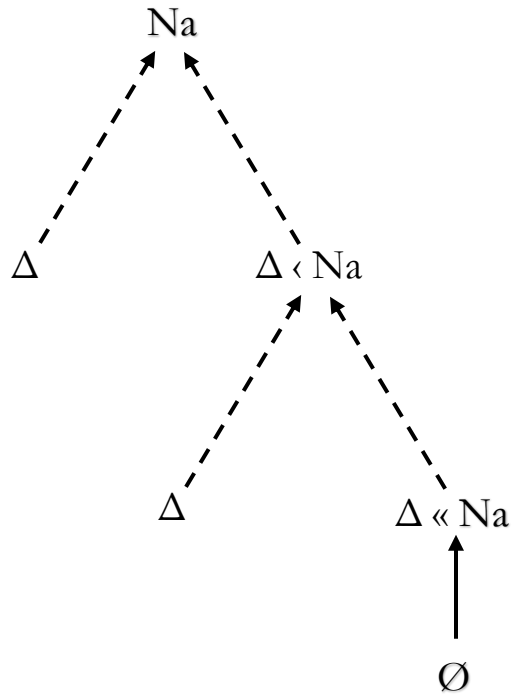
Since Γ, Δ, and Λ are all sets of non-normative facts, if a partial grounding-fact is even partially grounded in its first relatum, then on the Bennett/deRosset view, substantive

normative facts and principles are all fully grounded in non-normative facts. In that case, No Full, and thus non-naturalism, is false.

So, the structured non-naturalist might turn to Jon Litland's recent proposal for how to ground ground.[82] Litland, following Fine,[83] distinguishes between factive and non-factive ground. Factive ground is the kind I have been relying on: when A factively grounds B, A and B both obtain. When A non-factively grounds B, neither need obtain. Litland argues that when A factively grounds B, this fact is grounded in the fact that A non-factively grounds B, together with the fact that A. That A non-factively grounds B is itself zero-grounded—i.e., grounded in the members of the null set (i.e., none).[84]

Things get complicated when we ask how this account is supposed to extend to partial grounding-facts. The most natural way to extend the theory is to distinguish *partial* non-factive grounding from *full* non-factive grounding—although I know of no one explicitly doing so in the literature. Litland's view can then be extended to say that *full* factive grounding-facts are grounded in *full* non-factive grounding facts (together with the ground), whereas *partial* factive grounding-facts are grounded in *partial* non-factive grounding-facts (together with the ground). Let "A « B" stand for "A partially non-factively grounds B." On structured non-naturalism this gives us the following tree for a grounded normative fact:

[82] Litland (2017). Litland treats the term "ground" as an operator connecting sentences. I adapt the account here, simply to fit my approach.
[83] Fine (2012a): 48-50.
[84] See Fine (2012a): 47-48.

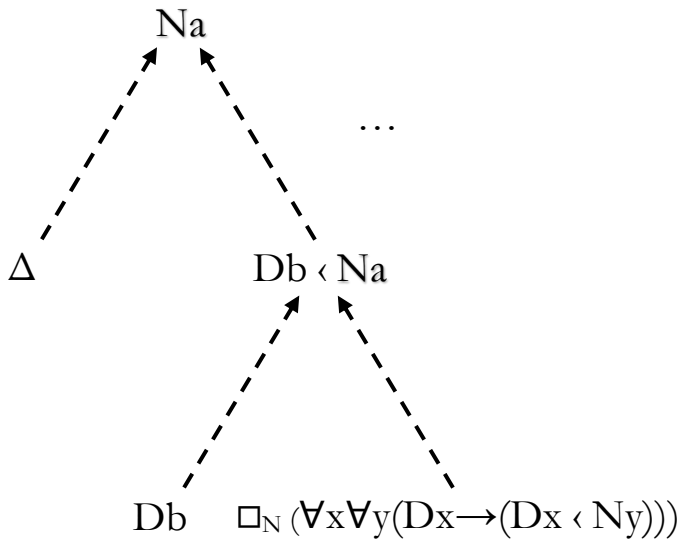


But again, using Cut, we can prove that on this picture, substantive normative facts and principles are always fully grounded in non-normative facts. Again, let Γ be the set of non-normative facts that ground Δ:

1. Γ < Δ
2. Ø < (Δ « Na)
3. Δ,(Δ « Na) < (Δ ‹ Na)
4. So, Γ,Ø < (Δ ‹ Na)
5. Δ,(Δ ‹ Na) < Na
6. Therefore, Γ, Γ,Ø < Na.

Here we have two applications of Cut, with the odd but harmless result that "Γ" appears twice in the grounds of Na. I've already established that Γ will contain only non-normative facts; Ø is also a non-normative fact. So on Litland's view, we again get the result that if normative principles are grounding-facts, then all normative facts are always fully grounded in non-normative facts.

On an alternate picture advocated by Gideon Rosen, a grounding-fact is grounded in its first relatum, *as well as some facts about essences*.[85] We can thus get something like the following tree for a normative fact:



("Db" is one member of Δ, but there it is possible that there are others—hence the ellipsis.) "$\Box_N$ (∀x∀y(Dx→(Dx ‹ Ny)))" is the claim that it is in the nature of the normative property N that when such-and-such non-normative facts obtain, those facts ground such-and-such normative facts.

The problem is, the structured non-naturalist cannot take this route: as Rosen has pointed out in another paper, and as I briefly outline above, to claim that it is in the nature of the normative that some non-normative facts ground some normative facts is a distinctly naturalistic claim.[86] (This is true even if the essentialist claim is a normative one, such that

[85] Rosen (2010). See also Dasgupta (2014), which endorses a broader sort of view, and explores some of the consequences of Rosen's particular version of it.
[86] Rosen (MS).

No Full is true: recall that No Full is only one commitment of non-naturalism.) After all, it is normative *naturalists* who claim that (e.g.) the wrongness of an action *by its nature* has something to do with the fact that that action fails to maximize utility, that that's *what it is* for an action to be wrong. So, on Rosen's picture, even though normative facts are not fully grounded in non-normative facts, non-naturalism is still false.

My defense of (3) has been long and somewhat complex. But the moral of the story is simple: on any of the main views of what grounds grounding facts, if normative principles are grounding-facts, then non-naturalism is false. On the Bennett/deRosset view, as well as Litland's view, I've proven that normative facts will be fully grounded in non-normative facts. On Rosen's view, this won't be the case, but the structured non-naturalist cannot appeal to such a view, since it entails normative naturalism. Certainly we could imagine other ways of grounding grounding facts. But (i) I've shown that non-naturalism is false on all those views currently thought plausible, and (ii) any new view might have problems of its own for the non-naturalist.[87] More generally still, this concludes my defense of The Master Argument. Strictly speaking, the argument shows that Structure and non-naturalism are incompatible.

3.4 Defense of (4)

The final option for the structured non-naturalist is to claim that principles are some kind of ungrounded fact. Call this the view that principles are fundamental facts. But I think

[87] If, for example, we thought that the fact that A ‹ B was grounded in both A *and* B, then the structured non-naturalist would again be committed to denying irreflexivity.

this can't be true: while there are some familiar problems with this view,[88] my objection is that normative principles are just not the right sort of thing to be fundamental. Metaphysics has as at least one of its primary concerns figuring out which facts are fundamental. Metaphysicians not only want to know what there is—they want to know what's at the bottom of it all, so to speak. The metaphysical grounding relation gives us an excellent way of going about this: the fundamental facts are the ungrounded ones.

But we don't want to know just which *facts* are fundamental, but also which objects and properties are fundamental. Theists would like to know if God is a fundamental object. Physicalists would like to know if mental properties are fundamental. Where grounding is a relation between *facts*, it's not as straightforward how we would answer such questions. But I suggest the following principle:

> Fundamentality: An entity (e.g., fact, property, object, etc.) is fundamental if and only if it is a constituent of a fundamental fact.[89]

This seems plausible to me: if mental properties are mentioned in the fundamental facts, then those physicalists who think mental properties aren't fundamental will not be happy. If God is mentioned in the fundamental facts, then theists who think God is a fundamental object will feel vindicated.

Here's an argument for Funtamentality: facts, we've said, are fundamental just when they're ungrounded. But when are other entities fundamental? Assuming that there *are* necessary and sufficient conditions for the fundamentality of non-fact entities, I submit:

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[88] See McPherson (2012) for a Humean sort of worry that would apply here.
[89] See Litland (2017); Sider (2011): §7.2, 8.2.1; deRosset (2013): 3; Bennett (2011): 27.

such entities are fundamental just when we can't describe the fundamental layer of reality without them. Suppose that facts about chairs are fully grounded in facts about sub-atomic particles: we can describe the fundamental layer of reality without ever mentioning chairs. Chairs are, in Michael Raven's sense, *eliminable* in the grounding order.[90] It's natural to say, then, that chairs are not fundamental objects. Suppose, however, that facts about the sub-atomic particles that ground chairs are ungrounded—then we can't describe the fundamental layer of reality without mentioning those particles. It is equally natural to then say that such particles are fundamental.

Consider, on the other hand, some alternative conditions on (non-fact) entity-fundamentality. Why not think, for example, that fundamental facts need not have *only* fundamental entities as constituents, but rather:

Alternative 1: Fundamental facts have at least one fundamental entity as a constituent.

Or, perhaps instead:

Alternative 2: An entity E is fundamental iff the fact that E exists is ungrounded.

Alternative 1, however, is a non-starter: it is a necessary condition for *fact*-fundamentality, but gives neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition on (non-fact) entity-fundamentality.

Alternative 2, on the other hand, has its own problems. Set aside that it has controversial consequences. (Material simples—plausibly fundamental—exist iff they are spatially located. But it might be that their being spatially located at least partially explains

[90] Raven (2016).

their existence, rather than the other way around.) The main problem here is not that Alternative 2 is false—it's that it entails Fundamentality, on two plausible assumptions. Consider the following argument from Alternative 2 to Fundamentality:

1. An entity E is fundamental iff the fact that E exists is ungrounded. (Alternative 2)
2. If the fact that E exists is ungrounded, then E is a constituent of an ungrounded fact. (First Plausible Assumption)
3. If E is a constituent of an ungrounded fact, then the fact that E exists is ungrounded. (Second Plausible Assumption)
4. Therefore, E is fundamental iff it is a constituent of a fundamental fact.

(2) is plausible because E is a constituent of the fact that E exists. (3) is plausible since it seems counterintuive that there should be constituents of ungrounded facts whose existence is grounded. Consider a clear case in which an entity's existence is grounded: material composites. The chair's existence is grounded in the existence of its parts. Precisely because of this, it seems like chairs won't show up in the fundamental layer of reality (the ungrounded facts).

But now assume, as we must if we deny (2), that normative principles are fundamental. What are some candidate (fundamental) normative principles? Here are a few:

- An act is wrong iff it doesn't maximize happiness.
- Belief that P is rational iff all the available evidence favors P over not-P.
- The only thing good without qualification is the good will.
- It is in one's best interest to avoid painful experiences.

If we assume that some principles are fundamental, surely at least one of these is a good candidate. But then the problem is clear: happiness and painfulness turn out to be fundamental properties, and beliefs and wills turn out to be fundamental objects. But that seems, at the very least, radically controversial.

My argument doesn't require the particular examples to be true fundamental principles. If premise (4) of the Master Argument is false, then there will be *some* true fundamental principle(s). And given what I said above—that the function of principles is to "take in" non-normative facts and "spit out" normative ones—such principles will have some non-normative object/property as a constituent. Now, it's possible that that non-normative entity will be fundamental—the fundamental normative principles could say something like "When the fundamental particles are arranged thus-and-so, then one ought to Φ". But it would be outrageous to hold our normative metaphysics hostage to such principles. That's just not what the fundamental normative principles look like, on any plausible normative theory.

Of course there are ways of replying to my argument here. One is to take issue with Fundamentality. "What this shows," one might object, "is that Fundamentality is false—it commits us to the claim that principles can't be fundamental. But this is more implausible than the denial of Fundamentality." But this isn't right. I have shown that Fundamentality is inconsistent with the view that *normative* principles are ungrounded *facts*. First, this may not apply to other kinds of principles: fundamental principles in physics may only have fundamental constituents. Second, Fundamentality is only a problem for the view that normative principles are fundamental *on the assumption of Structure*. Structure presupposes that principles are amongst the grounds of particular normative facts. Because grounding is factive, this entails that normative principles are facts. If such facts are ungrounded, Fundamentality gives rise to the problem I note. But if one thinks that principles are *not* amongst the grounds of other normative facts, but instead (as on Bader's

view) stand outside the grounding relation and "govern" it, one is free to deny that principles are facts. And then, since Fundamentality only entails that an entity is fundamental when it is a constituent of a fundamental *fact*, one can endorse both Fundamentality and the view that principles are ungrounded. Fundamentality only causes problems for the proponent of Structure.

A second type of reply is to accept Fundamentality, but to claim that normative principles are primitive—that they have no internal structure—as Maudlin claims of laws of nature.[91] But this view of principles makes most sense on views that *don't* place principles amongst the grounds of particular facts. I here treat grounding as a relation between facts, and facts have internal structure (so do truths and sentences, so my point here doesn't depend on any controversial assumption about grounding). Since the structured non-naturalist assumes that principles are amongst the grounds of normative facts, she cannot appeal to a view like Maudlin's.

It also seems out of place for the structured non-naturalist to appeal to Shamik Dasgupta's notion of *autonomous* facts.[92] An autonomous fact, according to Dasgupta, is one that is not *apt* for grounding. That a material simple is located at some particular place might be ungrounded—but it is still *apt* for grounding. The question "Why is the particle there?" isn't out of place, even if there's no answer to it. That it is essential to water that it is composed of H_20 is also ungrounded, but it also seems like it would be out of place to ask for its grounds. The first fact is merely ungrounded; the second is autonomous.

[91] See Maudlin (2007): 17-18. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this objection.
[92] Dasgupta (2014), Dasgupta (2016).

Yet even if we grant the distinction, it won't help: autonomous facts are still fundamental, in my sense.[93] So even if normative principles are autonomous, this doesn't alleviate the problem with Fundamentality: principles will still be ungrounded facts, such that any entity that partially constitutes one is fundamental. We thus shouldn't expect them to be made up of any non-fundamental entities. Yet normative principles involve apparently non-fundamental entities. Furthermore, plausible normative principles just aren't good candidates for autonomous facts: it seems to make sense to ask why it is that an act is wrong iff it doesn't maximize happiness, or why the good will is the only thing good without qualification. True, there may be no answer, just as there may be no answer as to why the material simple is located at a certain position. But as in all these cases, the questions seem to be in principle *answerable*.

SECTION 4: OPTIONS FOR THE NON-NATURALIST

I see two ways that the non-naturalist could avoid the problem I've outlined here while still retaining at least something *like* Structure. Since neither is without its problems, I will simply outline them here, noting the problems with each. The first solution is to deny Structure, replacing it with a closely related thesis. Some philosophers—most notably Fine[94]—think that there is a distinct kind of grounding in the normative domain. Call it *normative grounding*, and let "A $<_N$ B" mean that A fully normatively grounds B, and "A

[93] Dasgupta defines fundamentality differently, but this is irrelevant here.
[94] See Fine (2012a): 37-40. See also Rosen (MS).

‹$_N$ B" mean that A partially normatively grounds B. The main distinguishing mark of normative grounding is that when A <$_N$ B, A does not metaphysically entail B, but only *normatively* entails B; whereas, when A < B, A metaphysically entails B.[95] When A normatively grounds B, A still explains B, but this is a normative, and not a metaphysical explanation.

With this new notion in hand, the non-naturalist can endorse the following:

Structure$_N$: All substantive normative facts are partially *normatively* grounded in normative principles.

Structure$_N$ will not be in conflict with non-naturalism, as Structure is. And yet it may save the intuitions behind Structure.

This solution has a problem. It's a truism (or as close as philosophy can get to one) that the normative supervenes on the non-normative. But if normative facts are only fully *normatively* grounded in non-normative facts, then at best the non-naturalist can derive the following global supervenience claim:

Supervenience$_N$: For any two *normatively* possible worlds W_1 and W_2, if W_1 and W_2 are identical in all non-normative respects, then W_1 and W_2 are identical in all normative respects.

But the non-naturalist won't be able to explain a stronger supervenience claim:

Supervenience$_M$: For any two *metaphysically* possible worlds W_1 and W_2, if W_1 and W_2 are identical in all non-normative respects, then W_1 and W_2 are identical in all normative respects.[96]

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[95] Some question such entailment, such as Skiles (2015). I put such worries aside here, since without any such entailment, it becomes unclear how normative and metaphysical grounding are distinct, which would undermine the whole response here.

[96] See, e.g., McPherson (2012); Dreier (1992); Ridge (2007); Scanlon (2014): 3; Enoch (2011): ch. 6; Shafer-Landau (2003): 76-77. I don't claim that all these authors endorse the specific formulation of supervenience given here, only that some form of supervenience across all *metaphysically possible* worlds is agreed on.

This is because, if A $<_N$ B, then B obtains in all the *normatively* possible worlds in which A obtains; but for all that, there may be a *metaphysically* possible world where A obtains but B doesn't. (In fact, where A $<_N$ B, this seems to *require* that A not metaphysically entail B—that normative grounding involves a weaker entailment is part of how Fine defines the relation, and it is difficult to see how we would distinguish it from metaphysical grounding without this difference.[97]) The problem is, it is commonly thought that Supervenience$_M$ is true, and for good reason: if it is false, then even though it is wrong for me to kick the cat, there could be a possible world where it is ok for me to do so, even though all the non-normative features of the situation are the same. There could be worlds where the Rwandan genocide was permissible, though those worlds are just like this one in all non-normative respects.[98] So there is a widely-accepted and deeply intuitive claim that the non-naturalist won't be able to explain, if she resorts to normative grounding. (For all that, Supervenience$_M$ may actually be false, but I cannot explore this response here.[99])

A second solution is for the non-naturalist to appeal to what might be described as a variety of particularism. On this reply, principles play no robust explanatory role. There are just the substantive normative facts, where some of these may partially ground others (in the simplest case, conjunctive normative facts will be partially grounded in particular normative facts). That some normative facts partially ground others might be thought to save some of the spirit, if not the letter, of Structure.

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[97] Fine (2012a): section 1.
[98] See McPherson (2012), as well as Bader (forthcoming) for discussion.
[99] See Rosen (MS).

This kind of particularism, when combined with non-naturalism, generates a problem. Even if some substantive normative facts ground others, if No Full is true (and there are no infinite chains or circles of ground), then some substantive normative facts will have to be ungrounded. Presumably these will be particular normative facts, such as that John's motivation for cutting Linda off in the parking lot was bad. But such facts are horrible candidates for fundamentality—not only do they encounter similar problems with Fundamentality as normative principles did earlier—are motives fundamental entities?—but they just seem like they must be at least partially grounded in non-normative facts. That John's motivation was bad is partially grounded in the fact that he wanted to rile Linda up. But we can't think both that (i) particular normative facts are always partially grounded by some non-normative fact, and (ii) some particular normative fact is ungrounded. So if the particularist wants to be a non-naturalist, he'll have to deny (i). That seems a high price to me.

CONCLUSION

Non-naturalists want to rule out the *full* metaphysical dependence of some substantive normative facts or principles on non-normative facts. Many of them also hold the view that there is some structure to the normative: that substantive normative facts are partially grounded in principles. I've tried to show here that these two commitments are incompatible. Of course, the non-naturalist could simply deny Structure. But it seems impossible to replace it with a look-alike principle without paying too high a cost.

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